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Correction: **LEOPOLD LABEDZ,** who wrote "The Soviet Chill," published in the last issue of PR, is associate editor of **Survey.**

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Lionel Trilling

THE FATE OF PLEASURE: WORDSWORTH TO DOSTOEVSKY

Of all critical essays in the English language, there is none that has established itself so firmly in our minds as Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Indeed, certain of the statements that the Preface makes about the nature of poetry have come to exist for us as something like proverbs of criticism. This is deplorable, for the famous utterances, in the form in which we hold them in memory, can only darken counsel. A large part of the literate world believes that Wordsworth defines poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. With such a definition we shall not get very far in our efforts to think about poetry, and in point of fact Wordsworth makes no such definition. Much less does he say, as many find it convenient to recall, that poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity. Yet the tenacity with which we hold in mind our distortions of what Wordsworth actually does say suggests the peculiar power of the essay as a whole, its unique existence as a work of criticism. Its cogency in argument is notable, even if intermittent, but the Preface is not regarded by its readers only as an argument. By reason of its eloquence, and because of the impetuous spirit with which it engages the great questions of the nature and function of poetry, it presents itself to us not chiefly as a discourse, but rather as a dramatic action, and we are prepared to respond to its utterances less for their truth than for their happy boldness.

This being so, it should be a matter for surprise that one especially bold utterance of the Preface has not engaged us at all and is scarcely ever cited. I refer to the sentence in which Wordsworth speaks of what he calls "the grand elementary principle of pleasure," and says of it that it constitutes "the naked and native dignity of

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man," that it is the principle by which man "knows, and feels, and lives, and moves."

This is a statement which has great intrinsic interest, because, if we recognize that it is bold at all, we must also perceive that it is bold to the point of being shocking, for it echoes and it controverts St. Paul's sentence which tells us that "we live, and move, and have our being" in God. (*Acts,* XVII, 28.) And in addition to its intrinsic interest, it has great historical interest, not only because it sums up a characteristic tendency of eighteenth-century thought but also because it bears significantly upon a characteristic tendency of our contemporary culture. Its relation to our contemporary culture is chiefly a negative one—our present sense of life does not accommodate the idea of pleasure as something which constitutes the "naked and native dignity of man."

The word *pleasure* occurs frequently in the Preface. Like earlier writers on the subject, when Wordsworth undertakes to explain why we do, or should, value poetry, he bases his explanation upon the pleasure which poetry gives. Generally he uses the word in much the same sense that was intended by his predecessors. The pleasure which used commonly to be associated with poetry was morally unexceptionable and not very intense—it was generally understood that poetry might indeed sometimes excite the mind but only as a step toward composing it. But the word has, we know, two separate moral ambiences and two very different degrees of intensity. The pleasures of domestic life are virtuous; the pleasures of Imagination or Melancholy propose the idea of a cultivated delicacy of mind in those who experience them; the name of an English pipe-tobacco, "Parson's Pleasure," suggests how readily the word consorts with ideas of mildness. None of these propose what Byron had in mind when he wrote, *"O pleasure! you're indeed a pleasant thing,/Although one must be damn'd for you no doubt."* The *Oxford English Dictionary* takes due note of what it calls an "unfavorable" sense of the word: "Sensuous enjoyment as a chief object of life, or end, in itself" and informs us that in this pejorative sense it is "sometimes personified as a female deity." The Oxford lexicographers do not stop there but go on to recognize what they call a "strictly physical" sense, which is even lower in the moral scale: "the indulgence of the appetites, sensual gratification." The "unfavorable" significations of the word

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are dramatized by the English career of the most usual Latin word for pleasure, *voluptas*. Although some Latin-English dictionaries, especially those of the nineteenth century, say that *voluptas* means "pleasure, enjoyment, or delight of body or mind in a good or a bad sense," the word as it was used in antiquity seems to have been on the whole morally neutral and not necessarily intense. But the English words derived from *voluptas* are charged with moral judgment and are rather excited. We understand that it is not really to the minds of men that a voluptuous woman holds out the promise of pleasure, enjoyment, or delight. We do not expect a voluptuary to see his pleasures in domesticity, or in the Imagination or Melancholy, or in smoking a pipe.

It is obvious that any badness or unfavorableness of meaning that the word pleasure may have relates to the primitiveness of the enjoyment that is being referred to. Scarcely any moralist will object to pleasure as what we may call a secondary state of feeling, as a charm or grace added to the solid business of life. What does arouse strong adverse judgment is pleasure in its radical aspect, as it is the object of an essential and definitive energy of man's nature. It was because Bentham's moral theory asserted that pleasure was indeed the object of an essential and definitive part of man's nature that Carlyle called it the Pig-philosophy. He meant, of course, that it impugned man's nature to associate it so immediately with pleasure. Yet this is just how Wordsworth asks us to conceive man's nature in the sentence I have spoken of—it is precisely pleasure in its primitive or radical aspect that he has in mind. He speaks of "the grand *elementary* principle of pleasure," which is to say, pleasure not as a mere charm or amenity but as the object of an instinct, of what Freud, whose complex exposition of the part that pleasure plays in life is of course much in point here, was later to call a *drive*. How little concerned was Wordsworth, at least in this one sentence, with pleasure in its mere secondary aspect is suggested by his speaking of it as constituting the *dignity* of man, not having in mind such dignity as is conferred by society but that which is *native* and *naked*.

When Carlyle denounced Bentham's assertion that pleasure is, and must be, a first consideration of the human being, it was exactly man's dignity that he was undertaking to defend. The traditional morality to which Carlyle subscribed was certainly under no illusion

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about the crude force of man's impulse to self-gratification, but it did not associate man's dignity with this force—on the contrary, dignity, so far as it was personal and moral, was thought to derive from the resistance which man offers to the impulse to pleasure.

For Wordsworth, however, pleasure was the defining attribute of life itself and of nature itself—pleasure is the *"impulse from the vernal wood"* which teaches us more of man and his moral being *"than all the sages can."* And the fallen condition of humanity—*"what man has made of man"*—is comprised by the circumstance that man alone of natural beings does not experience the pleasure which, Wordsworth believes, moves the living world. It is of course a commonplace of Wordsworth criticism that, although the poet set the highest store by the idea of pleasure, the actual pleasures he represents are of a quite limited kind. Certainly he ruled out pleasures that are "strictly physical," those which derive from "the indulgence of the appetites" and "sensual gratification," more particularly erotic gratification. His living world of springtime is far removed from that of Lucretius: nothing in it is driven by the irresistible power of *alma Venus.* This is not to say that there is no erotic aspect to Wordsworth's mind; but the eroticism is very highly sublimated—Wordsworth's pleasure always tended toward *joy,* a purer and more nearly transcendant state. And yet our awareness of this significant limitation does not permit us to underrate the boldness of his statement in the Preface about the primacy of pleasure and the dignity which derives from the principle of pleasure, nor to ignore its intimate connection with certain radical aspects of the moral theory of the French Revolution.

For an understanding of the era of the Revolution, there is, I think, much to be gained from one of the works of the German economic historian, Werner Sombart, whose chief preoccupation was the origins of capitalism. In his extensive monograph, *Luxury and Capitalism,* Sombart develops the thesis that the first great accumulations of capital were achieved by the luxury trades in consequence of that ever-increasing demand for the pleasures of the world, for comfort, sumptuousness, and elegance, which is to be observed in Western Europe between the end of the Middle Ages and the end of the eighteenth century. As a comprehensive explanation of the rise of capitalism, this theory, I gather, has been largely discredited.

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Yet the social and cultural data which Sombart accumulates are in themselves very interesting, and they are much to our point.

Sombart advances the view that the European preoccupation with luxury took its rise in the princely courts and in the influence of women which court life made possible; he represents luxury as being essentially an expression of eroticism, as the effort to refine and complicate the sexual life, to enhance, as it were, the quality of erotic pleasure. The courtly luxury that Sombart studies is scarcely a unique instance of the association of pleasure with power, of pleasure being thought of as one of the signs of power and therefore to be made not merely manifest but conspicuous in the objects that constitute the *décor* of the lives of powerful men—surely Egypt, Cnossos, and Byzantium surpassed Renaissance Europe in elaborateness of luxury. But what would seem to be remarkable about the particular phenomenon that Sombart describes is the extent of its proliferation at a certain period—the sheer amount of luxury that got produced, its increasing availability to classes less than royal or noble, the overtness of desire for it, and the fierceness of this desire. Sombart's data on these points are too numerous to be adduced here, but any tourist, having in mind what he has even casually seen of the secondary arts of Europe from the centuries in question, the ornaments, furniture, and garniture of certain stations of life, will know that Sombart does not exaggerate about the amount of luxury produced. And any reader of Balzac will recognize the intensity of the passions which, at a somewhat later time, attended the acquisition of elaborate and costly objects which were desired as the means or signs of pleasure.

What chiefly engages our interest is the influence that luxury may be discovered to have upon social and moral ideas. Such an influence is to be observed in the growing tendency of power to express itself mediately, by signs or indices, rather than directly, by the exercise of force. The richness and elaboration of the objects in a princely establishment were the indices of a power which was actual enough, but they indicated an actual power which had no need to avow itself in action. What a prince conceived of as his dignity might, more than ever before, be expressed by affluence, by the means of pleasure made overt and conspicuous.

And as the objects of luxury became more widely available, so

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did the dignity which luxury was meant to imply. The connection between dignity and a luxurious style of life was at first not self-evident—in France in 1670 the very phrase *"bourgeois gentilhomme"* was thought to be comical. In the English translation of the title of Molière's comedy, *The Cit Turned Gentleman,* it was funny too, but the English laugh was neither so loud nor so long as the French. Tocqueville believed that it was the relatively easy growth of the English class of gentlemen, that is to say, the acceptance of the idea that the outward signs of status eventually conferred real status, which made an event like the Revolution of France unnecessary in England. Yet in France as in England, the downward spread of the idea of dignity, until it eventually became an idea that might be applied to man in general, was advanced by the increasing possibility of possessing the means or signs of pleasure. That idea, it need scarcely be said, established itself at the very heart of the radical thought of the eighteenth century. And Diderot himself, the most uncompromising of materialists, as he was the most subtle and delicate, could not have wanted a more categorical statement of his own moral and intellectual theory than Wordsworth's assertion that the grand elementary principle of pleasure constitutes the native and naked dignity of man, and that it is by this principle that man knows, and lives, and breathes, and moves.

Nothing so much connects Keats with Wordsworth as the extent of his conscious commitment to the principle of pleasure. But of course nothing so much separates Keats from his great master as his characteristic way of exemplifying the principle. In the degree that for Wordsworth pleasure is abstract and austere, for Keats it is explicit and voluptuous. No poet ever gave so much credence to the idea of pleasure in the sense of "indulgence of the appetites, sensual gratification," as Keats did, and the phenomenon that Sombart describes, the complex of pleasure-sensuality-luxury, makes the very fabric of his thought.

Keats's preoccupation with the creature-pleasures, as it manifests itself in his early work, is commonly regarded, even by some of his warmest admirers, with an amused disdain. At best it seems to derive from the kind of elegant miniscule imagination that used to design the charming erotic scenes for the lids of enamelled sweetmeat and snuff boxes. At worst it seems to be downright vulgar in the explicit-

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ness of its concern with luxury. The word itself had a charm for Keats, and in his use of it he seems on the point of reviving its Middle English meaning, which is specifically erotic and nothing but erotic; for Chaucer, *luxures* were lusts and *luxurie* was licentiousness. Women present themselves to Keats's imagination as luxuries: *"All that soft luxury/that nestled in his arms."* A poem is described as *"a posy/Of luxuries, bright, milky, soft and rosy."* Poetry itself is defined by reference to objects of luxury, and even in its highest nobility, its function is said to be that of comforting and soothing.

Nor is the vulgarity—if we consent to call it that—confined to the early works; we find it in an extreme form in a poem of Keats's maturity. The lover in *Lamia* is generally taken to be an innocent youth, yet the most corrupt young man of Balzac's scenes of Parisian life would scarcely have spoken to his mistress or his fiancée as Lycius speaks to Lamia when he insists that she display her beauty in public for the enhancement of his prestige. Tocqueville said that envy was the characteristic emotion of plutocratic democracy, and it is envy of a particularly ugly kind that Lycius wishes to excite. *"Let my foes choke,"* he says, *"and my friends shout afar,/While through the thronged streets your bridal car/Wheels round its dazzling spokes."* I am not sure that we should be at pains to insist that this is wholly a dramatic utterance and not a personal one, that we ought entirely to dissociate Keats from Lycius. I am inclined to think that we should suppose Keats to have been involved in all aspects of the principle of pleasure, even the ones that are vulgar and ugly. Otherwise we miss the full complication of that dialectic of pleasure which is the characteristic intellectual activity of Keats's poetry.

The movement of this dialectic is indicated in two lines from an early poem in which Keats speaks of *"the pillowy silkiness that rests/Full in the speculation of the stars"*—it is the movement from the sensual to the transcendant, from pleasure to knowledge, and knowledge of an ultimate kind. Keats's intellect was brought into fullest play when the intensity of his affirmation of pleasure was met by the intensity of his skepticism about pleasure. The principle of pleasure is for Keats, as it is for Wordsworth, the principle of reality—by it, as Wordsworth said, we *know*. But for Keats it is also the principle of

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illusion. In *The Eve of St. Agnes,* to take the most obvious example, the moment of pleasure at the center of the poem, erotic pleasure expressed in the fullest possible imagination of the luxurious, is the very essence of reality: it is all we know on earth and all we need to know. And it is the more real as reality and it is the more comprehensive as knowledge exactly because in the poem it exists surrounded by what on earth denies it, by darkness, cold, and death, which make it transitory, which make the felt and proclaimed reality mere illusion.

But we must be aware that in Keats's dialectic of pleasure it is not only external circumstances that condition pleasure and bring it into question as the principle of reality, but also the very nature of pleasure itself. If for Keats erotic enjoyment is the peak and crown of all pleasures, it is also his prime instance of the way in which the desire for pleasure denies itself and produces the very opposite of itself.

> *Love in a hut, with water and a crust,*
> *Is—Love, forgive us—cinder, ashes, dust;*
> *Love in a palace is perhaps at last*
> *More grievous torment than a hermit's fast.*

This opening statement of the second part of *Lamia* is not, as it is often said to be, merely a rather disagreeable jaunty cynicism but one of Keats's boldest expressions of his sense that there is something perverse and self-negating in the erotic life, that it is quite in the course of nature that we should feel *"Pleasure . . . turning to Poison as the bee-mouth sips."* He insists on the seriousness of the statement in a way that should not be hard to interpret—referring to the lines I have just quoted, he says

> *That is a doubtful tale from faery land,*
> *Hard for the non-elect to understand.*

That faery land we know very well—in the Nightingale Ode, Keats's epithet for the region is *forlorn;* it is the country of La Belle Dame Sans Merci, the scene of erotic pleasure which leads to devastation, of an erotic fulfillment which implies castration.

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Keats, then, may be thought of as the poet who made the boldest affirmation of the principle of pleasure and also as the poet who brought the principle of pleasure into the greatest and *sincerest* doubt. He therefore has for us a peculiar cultural interest, for it would seem to be true that at some point in modern history the principle of pleasure came to be regarded with just such ambivalence.

This divided state of feeling may be expressed in terms of a breach between politics and art. Modern societies seek to fulfill themselves in affluence, which of course implies the possibility of pleasure. Our political morality is more than acquiescent to this intention. Its simple and on the whole efficient criterion is the extent to which affluence is distributed among individuals and nations. But another morality, that which we may describe as being associated with art, regards with a stern and even minatory gaze all that is implied by affluence, and it takes a dim or at best a very complicated view of the principle of pleasure. If we speak not only of the two different modes of morality, the political and the artistic, but also of the people who are responsive to them, we can say that it is quite within the bounds of possibility, if not of consistency, for the same person to respond, and intensely, to both of the two moral modes: it is by no means uncommon for an educated person to base his judgment of politics on a simple affirmation of the principle of pleasure, and to base his judgment of art, and also his judgment of personal existence, on a complex antagonism to that principle. This dichotomy makes one of the most significant circumstances of our cultural situation.

A way of testing what I have said about the modern artistic attitude to pleasure is afforded by the conception of poetry which Keats formulates in *Sleep and Poetry*. This poem does not express everything that Keats thought about the nature and function of poetry, but what it does express is undeniably central to his thought, and for the modern sensibility it is inadmissible and even repulsive. It tells us that poetry is gentle, soothing, cheerful, healthful, serene, smooth, regal; that the poet, in the natural course of his development, will first devote his art to the representation of the pleasures of appetite, of things that can be bitten and tasted, such as apples, strawberries, and the white shoulders of nymphs, and that he will give his attention to the details of erotic enticement amid grateful

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sights and odors, and to sexual fulfillment and sleep. The poem then goes on to say that, as the poet grows older, he will write a different kind of poetry, which is called nobler; this later kind of poetry is less derived from and directed to the sensuality of youth and is more fitted to the gravity of mature years, but it still ministers to pleasure and must therefore be strict in its avoidance of ugly themes; it must not deal with those distressing matters which are referred to as *"the burrs and thorns of life";* the great end of poetry, we are told, is *"to soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man."*

Such doctrine from a great poet puzzles and embarrasses us. It is, we say, the essence of Philistinism.

The conception of the nature and function of poetry which Keats propounds is, of course, by no means unique with him—it can be understood as a statement of the common assumptions about art which prevailed through the Renaissance up to some point in the nineteenth century, when they began to lose their force.[1] Especially in the eighteenth century, art is closely associated with luxury—with the pleasure or at least the comfort of the consumer, or with the quite direct flattery of his ego. The very idea of Beauty seems to imply considerations of this sort, which is perhaps why the eighteenth century was so much drawn to the idea of the Sublime, for that word would seem to indicate a kind of success in art which could not be called Beauty because it lacked the smoothness and serenity (to take two attributes from Keats's catalogue) and the immediacy of gratification which the idea of Beauty seems to propose. But the Sublime itself of course served the purposes of egoism—thus, that instance of the Sublime which was called the Grand Style, as it is described by its great English exponent in painting, Sir Joshua Reynolds, is said to be concerned with "some instance of heroic action or heroic suffering" and its proper effect, Reynolds explains, is to produce the emotion which Bouchardon reported he felt when he read Homer:

1. One of the last significant exponents of the old assumptions was the young Yeats. He was "in all things pre-Raphaelite"— a partisan, that is, not of the early and austere pre-Raphaelite mode, but of the later sumptuous style, tinged with a sort of mystical eroticism—and he stubbornly resisted the realism of Carolus Duran and Bastien-Lepage, which was being brought back to England by the painters who had gone to study in Paris. His commitment to the "beautiful," as against truthful ugliness, was an issue of great moment between him and his father.

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"His whole frame appeared to himself to be enlarged, and all nature which surrounded him diminished to atoms."[2]

In connection with the art of the eighteenth century I used the disagreeable modern word *consumer,* meaning thus to suggest the affinity that art was thought to have with luxury, its status as a commodity which is implied by the solicitude it felt for the pleasure and the comfort of the person who was to own and experience it. Certainly Wordsworth was preeminent in the movement to change this state of affairs,[3] yet Wordsworth locates the value of metrical language as lying in its ability to protect the reader from the discomfort of certain situations that poetry may wish to represent and he compares the effect of such situations in novels with their effect in Shakespeare, his point being that in novels they are "distressful" but in Shakespeare they are not.[4] It was, we know, an explanation which

2. All writers on the Sublime say in effect what Bouchardon says—that, although the sublime subject induces an overpowering emotion, even fear or terror, it does so in a way that permits us to rise superior to it and thus give us occasion to have a good opinion of our power of intellect and of ourselves generally. The Sublime has this direct relation to comfort and luxury, that it induces us "to regard as small those things of which we are wont to be solicitous" (Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*). A more ambitious treatment of my subject would require a much fuller exposition of the theory of the Sublime. Of this theory, which so much occupied the writers on art of the eighteenth century, it can be said that it has much more bearing upon our own literature than modern critics have recognized. The classic study in English is Samuel H. Monk's *The Sublime,* first published in 1935, now available as an Ann Arbor Paperback.
3. ". . . Men . . . who talk of Poetry as a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac, or Sherry."
4. The strength of Wordsworth's impulse to suppress the "distressful" is suggested by the famous passage in *The Prelude* in which the poet explains how his childhood reading served to inure him to the terrors of actuality. He recounts the incident, which occurred when he was nine years old, of his seeing a drowned man brought up from the bottom of Esthwaite Lake. He was, he says, not overcome by fear of the "ghastly face," because his "inner eye" had seen such sights before in fairy tales and romances. And then he feels it necessary to go further, to go beyond the bounds of our ready credence, for he tells us that from his reading came "a spirit" which hallowed the awful sight

With decoration and ideal grace
A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
Of Grecian Art, and purest poesy.

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did not satisfy Keats, who was left to puzzle out why it is that in *King Lear* "all disagreeables evaporate." He discovers that this effect is achieved by "intensity," and we of our day are just at the point of being comfortable with him when he disappoints our best hopes by hedging: he is constrained to say that the "disagreeables" evaporate not only by the operation of intensity but also by "their being in close connection with Beauty & Truth." But we do at last find ourselves at one with him when, in his Sonnet, *On Sitting Down To Read King Lear Once Again,* he dismisses all thought of pleasure and prepares himself for the pain he is in duty bound to undergo:

> *. . . Once again, the fierce dispute*
> *Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay*
> *Must I burn through; once more humbly assay*
> *The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit.*

He is by no means certain that the disagreeables really will evaporate and that he will emerge whole and sound from the experience, and he prays to Shakespeare and *"the clouds of Albion"* that they will guard him against wandering *"in a barren dream,"* and that, when he is *"consumed in the fire,"* they will contrive his Phoenix-resurrection.

This we of our time can quite understand. We are repelled by the idea of an art that is consumer-directed and comfortable, let alone luxurious. Our typical experience of a work which will eventually have authority with us is to begin our relation to it at a conscious disadvantage, and to wrestle with until it consents to bless us. We express our high esteem for such a work by supposing that it judges us. And when it no longer does seem to judge us, or when it no longer baffles and resists us, when we begin to feel that we *possess* it, we discover that its power is diminished. In our praise of it we are not likely to use the word Beauty: we consented long ago—more than four decades ago—to the demonstration made by I. A. Richards in collaboration with Ogden and Wood that the concept of Beauty either could not be assigned any real meaning, or that it was frivolously derived from some assumed connection between works of art and our sexual preferences, quite conventional sexual preferences at that. "Beauty: it curves: curves are beauty," says Leopold Bloom, and we smile at so outmoded an aesthetic—how like him! With a

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similar amusement we read the language in which the young Yeats praised beauty in *The Secret Rose* (1896)—he speaks of it as *"the sleep/Men have named beauty."*[5]

In short, our contemporary aesthetic culture does not set great store by the principle of pleasure in its simple and primitive meaning and it may even be said to maintain an antagonism to the principle of pleasure. Such a statement of course has its aspect of absurdity, but in logic only. There is no psychic fact more available to our modern comprehension than that there are human impulses which, in one degree or another, and sometimes in the very highest degree, repudiate pleasure and seek gratification in—to use Freud's word—unpleasure.

The repudiation of pleasure in favor of the gratification which may be found in unpleasure is a leading theme of Dostoevsky's great *nouvelle, Notes From Underground.* Of this extraordinary work Thomas Mann has said that "its painful and scornful conclusions," its "radical frankness . . . ruthlessly transcending all novelistic and literary bounds" have "long become parts of our moral culture." Mann's statement is accurate but minimal—the painful and scornful conclusions of Dostoevsky's story have established themselves not only as parts of our moral culture but as its essence, at least so far as it makes itself explicit in literature.

Notes From Underground is an account, given in the first person, of the temperament and speculations of a miserable clerk, disadvantaged in every possible way, who responds to his unfortunate

5. Mr. Bloom's observation (which goes on to "shapely goddesses Venus, Juno: curves the world admires" and "lovely forms of women sculped Junonian") follows upon his lyrical recollection of his first sexual encounter with Molly; Yeats's phrase occurs in the course of a poem to Maud Gonne. I think it is true to say of Joyce (at least up through *Ulysses*), and of Yeats that they were among the last devotees of the European cult of Woman, of a Female Principle which, in one way or another, *ziegt uns hinein,* and that Molly and Maud are perhaps the last women in literature to be represented as having a transcendant and on the whole beneficent significance (although Lara in *Dr. Zhivago* should be mentioned—it is she who gives that novel much of its archaic quality). The radical change in our sexual mythos must surely be considered in any speculation about the status of pleasure in our culture. It is to the point, for example, that in Kafka's account of the spiritual life, which is touched on below, women play a part that is at best ambiguous.

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plight by every device of bitterness and resentment, by hostility toward those of mankind who are more unfortunate than he is, and also by the fiercest contempt for his more fortunate fellow-beings, and for the elements of good fortune. He hates all men of purposeful life, and reasonable men, and action, and happiness, and what he refers to as "the sublime and the beautiful," and pleasure. His mind is subtle, complex, and contradictory almost beyond credibility—we never know where to have him and in our exhaustion we are likely to explain his perversity in some simple way, such as that he hates because he is envious, that he despises what he cannot have: all quite natural. But we are not permitted to lay this flattering unction to our souls—for one thing, he himself beats us to that explanation. And although it is quite true, it is only a small part of the truth. It is also true that he does not have because he does not wish to have; he has arranged his own misery—arranged it in the interests of his dignity, which is to say, of his freedom. For to want what is commonly thought to be appropriate to men, to want whatever it is, high or low, that is believed to yield pleasure, to be active about securing it, to use common sense and prudence to the end of gaining it, this is to admit and consent to the *conditioned* nature of man. What a distance we have come in the six decades since Wordsworth wrote his Preface! To know and feel and live and move at the behest of the principle of pleasure—this, for the Underground Man, so far from constituting his native and naked dignity, constitutes his humiliation in bondage. It makes him, he believes, a mechanic thing, the puppet of whoever or whatever can offer him the means of pleasure. If pleasure is indeed the principle of his being, he is as *known* as the sum of 2 and 2; he is a mere object of reason, of that rationality of the Revolution which is established upon the primacy of the principle of pleasure.

At one point in his narrative, the protagonist of *Notes From Underground* speaks of himself as an "anti-hero." He is the eponymous ancestor of a now-numerous tribe. He stands as the antagonistic opposite to all the qualities which are represented by that statue of Sophocles which Professor Margarete Bieber tells us we are to have in mind when we try to understand the Greek conception of the hero, the grave beauty of the countenance and physique expressing the strength and order of the soul; the Underground Man traces his

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line of descent back to Thersites. It is in his character of anti-hero that he addresses the "gentlemen," as he calls them, the men of action and reason, the lovers of the "sublime and the beautiful," and brags to them, "I have more life in me than you have."

More life: perhaps it was this boast of the Underground Man that Nietzsche recalled when he said, "Dostoevsky's Underman and my Overman are the same person clawing his way out of the pit [of modern thought and feeling] into the sunlight." One understands what Nietzsche meant, but he is mistaken in the identification, for his own imagination is bounded on one side by that word *sunlight,* by the Mediterranean world which he loved: by the tradition of humanism with its recognition of the value of pleasure. He is ineluctably constrained by considerations of society and culture, however much he may despise his own society and culture, but the Underground Man is not. To be sure, the terms of the latter's experience are, in the first instance, social; he is preoccupied by questions of status and dignity, and he could not, we may suppose, have come into existence if the fates of the heroes of Balzac and Stendhal had not previously demonstrated that no object of desire or of the social will is anything but an illusion and a source of corruption, society being what it is. But it is the essence of the Underground Man's position that his antagonism to society arises not in response to the deficiencies of social life, but, rather, in response to the insult society offers his freedom by aspiring to be beneficent, to embody "the sublime and the beautiful" as elements of its being. The anger Dostoevsky expresses in *Notes From Underground* was mobilized not by the bad social condition of Russia in 1864 but by the avowed hope of some people that a good social condition could be brought into being. A utopian novel of the day, Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?*,[6] represented to him a particularly repugnant expression of

6. "A Utopian novel of the day" does not, of course, give anything like an adequate notion of the book's importance in the political culture of Russia. Dostoevsky chose his antagonist with the precision that was characteristic of him, for Chernyshevsky, who thought of himself as the heir of the French Enlightenment, by his one novel exercised a decisive influence upon the Russian revolutionaries of the next two generations, most notably upon Lenin, who borrowed its title for one of his best-known pamphlets. It is worth recalling, since freedom of one kind or another is in question, that *What Is To Be Done?* was written during Chernyshevsky's political imprisonment.

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this hope. His disgust was aroused by this novel's assumption, that man would be better for a rationally organized society, by which was meant, of course, a society organized in the service of pleasure. Dostoevsky's reprobation of this idea, begun in *Notes From Underground,* reached its climax in Ivan Karamazov's poem of The Grand Inquisitor, in which again, but this time without the brilliant perversities of the earlier work, the disgust with the specious good of pleasure is the ground for the affirmation of spiritual freedom.

I have taken the phrase "specious good" from a passage in Wallace Fowlie's little book on Rimbaud, in which Mr. Fowlie discusses what he calls "the modern seizure and comprehension of spirituality." Without evasion, Mr. Fowlie identifies a chief characteristic of our culture which critics must inevitably be conscious of and yet don't like to name. If we are to be aware of the spiritual intention of modern literature, we have to get rid of certain nineteenth-century connotations of the word spiritual, all that they may imply to us of an over-refined and even effeminate quality, and have chiefly in mind what Mr. Fowlie refers to when he speaks of a certain type of saint and a certain type of poet and says of them that "both the saint and the poet exist through some propagation of destructive violence." And Mr. Fowlie continues: "In order to discover what is the center of themselves, the saint has to destroy the world of evil, and the poet has to destroy the world of specious good."

The destruction of what is considered to be specious good is surely one of the chief literary enterprises of our age. Whenever in modern literature we find violence, whether of represented act or of expression, and the insistence upon the sordid and the disgusting, and the insult offered to the prevailing morality or habit of life, we may assume that we are in the presence of the intention to destroy specious good, that we are being confronted by that spirituality, or the aspiration toward it, which subsists upon violence against the specious good.

The most immediate specious good that a modern writer will seek to destroy is, of course, the habits, manners, and "values" of the bourgeois world, and not merely because these associate themselves with much that is bad, such as vulgarity, or the exploitation of the disadvantaged, but for other reasons as well, because they

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clog and hamper the movement of the individual spirit toward freedom, because they prevent the attainment of "more life." The particular systems and modes of thought of the bourgeois world are a natural first target for the modern spirituality. But it is not hard to believe that the impulse to destroy specious good would be as readily directed against the most benign society, which, by modern definition, serves the principle of pleasure.

In the characteristically modern conception of the spiritual life, the influence of Dostoevsky is definitive. By comparison with it, the influence of Nietzsche is marginal. For however radical Nietzsche was in criticism of the existing culture, the terms of his adversity were, as I have remarked, essentially social and humanistic. The moral and personal qualities suggested by a particular class, the aristocracy, had great simple force with him and proposed to his imagination a particular style of life. Despite the scorn he expressed for liberal democracy and socialist theory as he knew them, he was able to speak with sympathy of future democracies and possible socialisms, led to do so by that element of his thought which served to aerate his mind and keep it frank and generous—his awareness of the part played in human existence by the will to power, which, however it figures in the thought of his epigones and vulgarizers, was conceived by Nietzsche himself as comprising the whole range of the possibilities of human energy, creativity, libido. The claims of any social group to this human characteristic had weight with him. And he gave ready credence to the pleasure that attends one or another kind of power; if he was quick to judge people by the pleasures they chose—and woe to those who preferred beer to wine and *Parsifal* to *Carmen*!—the principle of pleasure presented itself to him as constituting an element of the dignity of man. It is because of this humanism of his, this naturalistic acceptance of power and pleasure, that Nietzsche is held at a distance by the modern spiritual sensibility. And the converse of what explains Nietzsche's relative marginality explains Dostoevsky's position at the very heart of the modern spiritual life.

If we speak of spirituality, we must note that it is not only humanism that is negated by the Underground Man but Christianity as well, or at least Christianity as Western Europe understands it. For not only humanism but the Christianity of the West bases reason

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upon pleasure, upon pleasure postponed and purified but analagous in kind to worldly pleasure. Dostoevsky's clerk has had his way with us: it would seem to be true that, in the degree that the promises of the spiritual life are made in terms of pleasure—of comfort, rest, and beauty—they have no power over the modern imagination. If Kafka, perhaps more than any other writer of our time, lends the color of reality to the events of the spiritual life, his power to do so lies in his characterizing these events by unpleasure, by sordidness and disorder, even when, as in *The Castle,* the spiritual struggle seems to yield a measure of success. He understood that a divinity who, like St. Augustine's, could be spoken of as gratifying all the senses, must nowadays be deficient in reality, that a heaven which is presented to us as well-ordered, commodious, beautiful—as *luxurious*—cannot be an object of hope. He was set on the road to this understanding by Dostoevsky, who, more dramatically and cogently than anyone before him, expresses the modern aversion from pleasure. Yeats tells us that "Berkeley in his youth described the *summum bonum* and the reality of Heaven as physical pleasure, and thought this conception made both more intelligible to simple men." To simple men perhaps, but who now is a simple man? How far from our imagination is the idea of "peace" as the crown of spiritual struggle! The idea of "bliss" is even further removed. The two words propose to us a state of virtually infantile passivity which is the negation of the "more life" that we crave, the "more life" of spiritual militancy. We dread Eden, and of all Christian concepts there is none which we understand so well as the *"felix culpa"* and the "fortunate fall"; not, of course, for the reason on which these Christian paradoxes were based, but because by means of the sin and the fall we managed to get ourselves expelled from that dreadful place.

I have tried to make explicit, although surely in a way that is all too summary, a change in the assumptions of literature which everybody is more or less aware of. In undertaking to do this, my first intention has been historical and objective. But it must be obvious that my account of the change has not been wholly objective in the sense of being wholly neutral. It asks a question which is inevitably adversary in some degree, if only by reason of the irony

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which is implicit in the historical approach to a fact of moral culture. It suggests that the modern spirituality, with its devaluation of the principle of pleasure, because it came into being at a particular time, may be regarded as a contingent and not a necessary mode of thought. This opens the way to regarding it as a mode of thought which is "received" or "established" and which is therefore, like any other received or established mode of thought, available to critical scrutiny.

And that possibility is by no means comfortable. We set great store by the unillusioned militancy of spirit which deals violently with the specious good. Upon it we base whatever self-esteem we can lay claim to—it gives us, as one of D. H. Lawrence's characters says of it (or something very much like it) our "last distinction"; he feels that to question it is a "sort of vulgarity."[7] To what end, with what intention, is it to be questioned? Can an adversary scrutiny of it point away from it to anything else than an idiot literature, to "positive heroes" who know how to get the good out of life and who have "affirmative" emotions about their success in doing so? The energy, the consciousness, and the wit of modern literature derive from its enterprise of violence against the specious good of whatever poor "pleasure" may be offered to us by the universe or by our general culture in its quotidian aspects. We feel an instinctive resentment of questions which tend to suggest that there is fault to be found with the one saving element of our moral situation—that extruded "high" segment of our general culture, with its exigent, violently subversive spirituality, with its power of arming us against, and setting us apart from, all in the general culture that we hate and fear.

Then what justification can there be for describing with any irony at all the diminished status of the principle of pleasure which characterizes this segment of our culture?

Possibly one small justification can be brought to light by reference to a famous passage in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, the one in which Augustine speaks of an episode of his adolescence and asks why he entered that orchard and stole those pears. Of all the acts of his unregenerate days which he calls sinful and examines

7. Gerald Crich, in Chapter XXIX of *Women in Love.*

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in his grim, brilliant way, there is none that he nags so persistently, none that seems to lie so far beyond the reach of his ready comprehension of sin. He did not steal the pears because he was hungry. He did not steal them because they were delicious—they were pears of rather poor quality, he had better at home. He did not steal them to win the admiration of the friends who were with him, although this comes close, for, as he says, he would not have stolen them if he had been alone. In all sin, he says, there is a patent motivating desire, some good to be gained, some pleasure for the sake of which the act was committed. But this sin of the stolen pears is, as it were, pure—he can discover no human reason for it. He speaks again of the presence of the companions, but although their being with him was a necessary condition of the act, it cannot be said to have motivated it. To the mature Augustine, the petty theft of his youth is horrifying not only because it seems to have been a sin committed solely for the sake of sinning, but because, in having no conceivable pleasure in view, it was a sort of negative transcendance—in effect, a negation—of his humanity. This is not strange to us—what I have called the high extruded segment of our general culture has for some time been engaged in an experiment in the negative transcendance of the human, a condition which is to be achieved by freeing the self from its thralldom to pleasure. Augustine's puzzling sin is the paradigm of the modern spiritual enterprise, and in his reprobation of it is to be found the reason why Dostoevsky contemned and hated the Christianity of the West, which he denounced as, in effect, a vulgar humanism.

To be aware of this undertaking of negative transcendance is, surely, to admire the energy of its desperateness. And we can comprehend how, for the consumer of literature, for that highly developed person who must perforce live the bourgeois life in an affluent society, an aesthetic ethos based on the devaluation of pleasure can serve, and seem to save, one of the two souls which inhabit his breast. Nearly overcome as we are by the specious good, insulted as we are by being forced to acquire it, we claim the right of the Underground Man to address the "gentlemen" with our assertion, "I have more life in me than you have," which consorts better with the refinement of our sensibility than other brags that men have made, such as, "I am stronger than you," or "I am holier than

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thou." Our high culture invites us to transfer our energies from the bourgeois competition to the spiritual competition. We find our "distinction"—last or penultimate—in our triumph over the miserable "gentlemen," whether they are others or ourselves, whether our cry be, "I have more life in me than you have" or "I have more life in me than I have." Now and then it must occur to us that the life of competition for spiritual status is not without its sordidness and absurdity. But how else are we to live?

But this is a matter for the novelist—for that novelist we do not yet have but must surely have one day, who will take into serious and comic account the actualities of the spiritual career of our time.

More immediately available to our awareness and more substantive and simple in itself is the effect which the devaluation of pleasure has upon the relation between our high literature and our life in politics, taking that word in its largest possible sense. There was a time when literature assumed that the best ideals of politics were naturally in accord with its own essence, when poetry celebrated the qualities of social life which had their paradigmatic existence in poetry itself. Keats's *Poems* of 1817 takes for its epigraph two lines from Spenser which are intended to point up the political overtone of the volume: *"What more felicity can fall to creature/ Than to enjoy delight with liberty."* Even when Wordsworth is deep in Toryism and Stoic Christianity, it is natural for him to assert the Utopian possibility.

> *Paradise and groves*
> *Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old*
> *Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be*
> *A history only of departed things,*
> *Or a mere fiction of what never was?*

He goes on to say categorically that these imaginations may become, at the behest of rationality and good will, *"a simple produce of the common day."* But the old connection between literature and politics has been dissolved. For the typical modern literary personality, political life is likely to exist only as it makes an occasion for the disgust and rage which are essential to the state of modern spirituality, as

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one particular instance of the irrational, violent, and obscene fantasy which life in general is, as licensing the counter-fantasy of the poet.

In a recent essay,[8] William Phillips described in an accurate and telling way the dichotomy that has developed between modern literature and a rational and positive politics, and went on to explain why, for literature's sake, the separation must be maintained. "It now looks," Mr. Phillips said,

> . . . as though a radical literature and a radical politics must be kept apart. For radical politics of the modern variety has really served as an antidote to literature. The moral hygiene, the puritanism, the benevolence—all the virtues that sprout on the left—work like a cure for the perverse and morbid idealism of the modern writer. If writing is to be thought of as radical, it must be in a deeper sense, in the sense not simply of cutting across the grain of contemporary life but also of reaching for the connections between the real and the forbidden and the fantastic. The classic example is Dostoevsky . . .

The situation that Mr. Phillips describes will scarcely be a matter of indifference to those of us who, while responding to the force of the perverse and morbid idealism of modern literature, are habituated to think of literature and politics as naturally having affinity with each other. We cannot but feel a discomfort of mind at the idea of their hostile separation, and we are led to ask whether the breach is as complete as Mr. Phillips says it is. His description, it seems to me, so far as it bears upon the situation of the moment, upon the situation as it presents itself to the practitioner of literature, needs no modification. But if we consider the matter in a more extended perspective, in the long view of the cultural historian, it must occur to us to speculate—even at the risk of being "hygienic" —whether the perverse and morbid idealism of modern literature is not to be thought of as being precisely political, whether it does not express a demand which in its own way is rational and positive and which may have to be taken into eventual account by a rational and positive politics.

If we do ask this question, we will be ready to remind ourselves that the devaluation of the pleasure principle, or, as perhaps we ought to put it, the imagination of going *beyond the pleasure*

8. "What Happened in the 30's," *Commentary,* September 1962.

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principle is, after all, not merely an event of a particular moment in culture. It is, as Freud made plain in his famous essay, a fact of the psychic life itself. The impulse to go beyond the pleasure principle is certainly to be observed not only in modern literature but in all literature, and of course not only in literature but in the emotional economy of at least some persons in all epochs. But what we can indeed call an event in culture is that at a particular moment in history, in our moment, this fact of the psychic life became a salient and dominant theme in literature, and also that it has been made explicit as a fact in the psychic life and forced upon our consciousness by Freud's momentous foray into metapsychology. And this cultural event may indeed be understood in political terms, as likely to have eventual political consequences, just as we understood in political terms and as having had political consequences the eighteenth-century assertion that the dignity of man was to be found in the principle of pleasure.

We deal with a change in quantity. It has always been true of some men that to pleasure they have preferred what the world called unpleasure. They imposed upon themselves difficult and painful tasks, they committed themselves to strange, "unnatural" modes of life, they sought out distressing emotions, in order to know psychic energies which are not to be summoned up in felicity. These psychic energies, even when they are experienced in self-destruction, are a means of self-definition and self-affirmation. As such, they have a social reference—the election of unpleasure, however isolate and private the act may be, must refer to society if only because the choice denies the valuation which society in general puts upon pleasure; and of course it often receives social approbation in the highest degree, even if at a remove of time: it is the choice of the hero, the saint and martyr, and, in some cultures, the artist. The quantitative change which we have to take account of is: what was once a mode of experience of a few has now become an ideal of experience of many. For reasons which, at least here, must defy speculation, the ideal of pleasure has exhausted itself, almost as if it had been actually realized and had issued in satiety and *ennui*. In its place, or, at least, beside it, there is developing—conceivably at the behest of literature!—an ideal of the experience of those psychic energies which are linked with unpleasure and which are directed

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toward self-definition and self-affirmation. Such an ideal makes a demand upon society for its satisfaction: it is a political fact.

What I have called the spirituality of modern literature can scarcely be immune from irony, and the less so as we see it advancing in the easy comprehension of increasing numbers of people, to the point of its becoming, through the medium of the stage and the cinema, the stuff of popular entertainment—how can irony be withheld from an accredited subversiveness, an established moral radicalism, a respectable violence, an entertaining spirituality? But although the anomalies of the culture of the educated middle class do indeed justify an adversary response, and perhaps a weightier one than that of irony, yet a response that is nothing but adversary will not be adequate.

We often hear it said nowadays, usually by psychoanalysts and by writers oriented toward psychoanalysis, that the very existence of civilization is threatened unless society can give credence to the principle of pleasure and learn how to implement it. We understand what is meant, that repressiveness and oppression will be lessened if the principle of pleasure is established in our social arrangements, and we readily assent. Yet secretly we know that the formula does not satisfy the condition it addresses itself to—it leaves out of account those psychic energies which press beyond the pleasure principle and even deny it.

It is possible to say that—whether for good or for bad—we confront a mutation in culture by which an old established proportion between the pleasure-seeking instincts and the ego instincts is being altered in favor of the latter.[9] If we follow Freud through the

9. I said something to this effect when, in "On The Modern Element of Modern Literature" (*Partisan Review,* January-February 1961), I commented on the status of tragedy in our culture. I ventured the opinion that the tragic mode is not available to us—this was not, I said, a mark of our spiritual inferiority —because we do not think of the degradation or downfall of the protagonist as a deplorable event: what he loses in the worldly way we judge to be well lost for the sake of the reality and truth, the ultimate self-realization, which we understand tragedy to bring. I based my generalization on our response to the fate of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* and Aschenbach in *Death In Venice.* Lionel Abel, in the brilliant chapter on tragedy in his *Metatheatre,* says that a tragedy—a real tragedy, of which Mr. Abel believes there are only a very few—must have for its protagonist a "daemon," that is

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awesome paradoxes of *Beyond The Pleasure Principle,* we may understand why the indications of this change should present themselves as perverse and morbid, for the other name that Freud uses for the ego instincts is the death instincts. Freud's having made the ego instincts synonymous with the death instincts accounts, more than anything else in his dark and difficult essay, for the cloud of misunderstanding in which it exists. But before we conclude that *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* issues, as many believe, in an ultimate pessimism or "negation," and before we conclude that the tendencies in our literature which we have remarked on are nothing but perverse and morbid, let us recall that although Freud did indeed say that "the aim of all life is death," the course of his argument leads him to the statement that "the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion," only through the complex fullness of its appropriate life.

to say, a person who, "having lived through tragic destruction . . . becomes divine, a daemon." I understand Mr. Abel to be saying that the tragic destruction is the extirpation of "merely" human feelings, that the daemonic existence comes with the protagonist's survival of the death of the pleasure-seeking instincts. Kurtz and Aschenbach become daemons, or nearly, but our emotions don't take into account the "destruction" or fall as the traditional emotions in response to tragedy were supposed to do.

For a full and detailed account of the modern devaluation of that good fortune the destruction of which once pained us in tragedy, see Thomas Munro: "The Failure Story: A Study of Contemporary Pessimism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. XVII, No. 2, December 1958.

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Doris Lessing

A LETTER FROM HOME

. . . *Ja,* but that isn't why I'm writing this time. You asked about Dick. You're worrying about him?—man! but he's got a poetry scholarship from a Texas university and he's lecturing the Texans about letters and life too in Suid Afrika, South Africa to you (forgive the hostility) and his poems are read, so they tell me, wherever the English read poetry. He's fine, man, but I thought I'd tell you about Johannes Potgieter, remember him? Remember the young poet, The Young Poet? He was around that winter you were here, don't tell me you've forgotten those big melting brown eyes and those dimples. About ten years ago (ja, time flies,) he got a type of unofficial grace-gift of a job at St. — University on the strength of those poems of his, and God they were good. Not that you or any other English-speaking *domkop* will ever know, because they don't translate out of Afrikaans. Remember me telling you and everyone else (give me credit for that at least, I give the devil his due, when he's a poet) what a poet he was, how blerry good he was—but several people tried to translate Hans' poems, including me, and failed. Right. *Goed.* Meanwhile a third of the world's population or is it a fifth, or to put it another way, X5Y59 million people speak English (and it's increasing by six births a minute) but one million people speak Afrikaans, and though I say it in a whisper, man, only a fraction of them can read it, I mean to read it. But Hans is still a great poet. Right.

He wasn't all that happy about being a sort of unofficial Laureate at that University, it's no secret some poets don't make Laureates. At the end of seven months he produced a book of poems which had the whole God-fearing place sweating and sniffing out heresy of all kinds, sin, sex, liberalism, brother-love etc. and so on; but of course in a civilized country (I say this under my breath, or I'll get

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the sack from my University, and I've got four daughters these days, had you forgotten?) no one would see anything in them but good poetry. Which is how Hans saw them, poor innocent soul, he was surprised at what people saw in them, and he was all upset. He didn't like being called all those names, and the good country boys from their fine farms and the smart town boys from their big houses all started taking positions and making remarks, and our Hans, he was reduced to pap, because he's not a fighter, Hans, he was never a taker of positions on the side of justice freedom and the rest, for tell you the truth, I don't think he ever got round to defining them. *Goed.* He resigned, in what might be called a dignified silence, but his friends knew it was just plain cowardice or if you like incomprehension about what the fuss was over, and he went to live in Blagspruit in the Orange Free, where his Tantie Gertrude had a house. He helped her in her store. Ja, that's what he did. What did we all say to this? Well, what do you think? The inner soul of the artist (et cetera) knows what is best, and he probably *needed* the Orange Free and his Auntie's store for his development. Well, something like that. To tell the truth, we didn't say much, he simply dropped out. And time passed. *Ja.* Then they made me editor of *Onwards,* and thinking about our indigenous poets I remembered Johannes Potgieter, and wrote, What about a poem from you?—feeling bad because when I counted up the years it was eight since I'd even thought of him, even counting those times when one says drunk at dawn: Remember Hans? Now, there was a poet . . .

No reply, so I let an editorial interval elapse and I wrote again, and I got a very correct letter back. Well phrased. Polite. But not just that, it took me an hour to work out the handwriting—it was in a sort of Gothic print, each letter a work of art, like a medieval manuscript. But all he said, in that beautiful black art-writing was: He was very well, he hoped I was very well, the weather was good, except the rains were late, his Tantie Gertie was dead, and he was running the store. "*Jou vriend,* Johannes Potgieter."

Right. *Goed.* I was taking a trip up to Joburg so I wrote and said I'd drop in at Blagspruit on my way back and I got another Manu Script, or Missal, saying he hoped to see me, and he would prepare Esther for my coming. I thought, he's married, poor *kerel,* and it was the first time I'd thought of him as anything but a born

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bachelor, and I was right—because when I'd done with Joburg, not a moment too soon, and driven down to the Orange Free, and arrived on the doorstep, there was Hans, but not a sign of a wife and Esther turned out to be—but first I take pleasure in telling you that the beautiful brown-eyed poet with his noble brow and pale dimpled skin was bald, he has a tonsure, I swear it; and he's fat, a sort of smooth pale fat. He's like a monk, lard-colored and fat and smooth. Esther is the cook, or rather, his jailor. She's a Zulu, a great fat woman, and I swear she put the fear of God into me before I even got into the house. Tantie Gertie's house is a square brick four-roomed shack, you know the kind, with an iron roof and verandahs —well, what you'd expect in Blagspruit. And Esther stood about six feet high in a white apron and a white *doekie* and she held a lamp up in one great black fist and looked into my face and sighed and went off into her kitchen singing Rock of Ages. *Ja,* I promise you. And I looked at Hans, and all he said was: "Its O.K., man, she likes you, come in."

She gave us a great supper of roast mutton and pumpkin fritters and samp, and then some preserved fruit. She stood over us, arms folded, as we ate, and when Johannes left some mutton fat, she said in her mellow hymn-singing voice: "Waste not, want not, Master Johannes." And he ate it all up. *Ja.* She told me I should have some more peaches for my health, but I defied her and I felt as guilty as a small kicker, and I could see Hans eyeing me down the table and wondering where I got the nerve. She lives in the *kia* at the back, one small room with four children by various fathers, but no man, because God is more than enough for her now, you can see, with all those kids and Hans to bring up the right way. Auntie's store is a Drapery and General Goods in the main street, called Gertie's Store, and Hans was running it with a Colored man. But I heard Esther with my own ears at supper saying to his bowed bald shamed head: "Master Johannes, I heard from the cook at the Predikant's house today that the dried peaches have got worms in them." And Hans said: "O.K., Esther, I'll send them up some of the new stock tomorrow."

Right. We spent all that evening talking and he was the same old Hans, you remember how he used to sit, saying not a blerry word, smiling that sweet dimpled smile of his, listening, listening,

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and then he'd ask a question, remember? Well, *do* you? Because its only just now *I'm* beginning to remember. People'd be talking about, I don't know what, the Nats or the weather or the grape-crop, anything, and just as you'd start to get nervous because he never said anything he'd lean forward and start questioning, terribly serious, earnest, about some detail, something not quite central, if you know what I mean. Remember now? He'd lean forward, smiling, smiling, and he'd say: "You really mean that, it rained all morning? It rained all *morning,* is that the truth?" That's right, you'd say, a bit uneasy, and he'd say, shaking his head, "God, man, it rained all morning, you say . . ." And then there'd be a considerable silence till things picked up again. And half an hour later he'd say: "You really mean it, the hanepoort grapes are good this year?"

Right. We drank a good bit of *brandewyn* that night, but in a civilized way, you know: "Would you like another little drop, Martin?" "*Ja,* just a small tot, Hans, thank you," but we got pretty pickled, and when I woke Sunday morning, I felt like death, but Esther was setting down a tray of tea by my bed, all dressed up in her Sunday hat and her black silk saying: "*Goeie more,* Master du Preez, it's nearly time for Church," and I nearly said: "I'm not a church-goer, Esther," but I thought better of it, because it came to me, can it be possible, has our Hans turned a God-fearing man in Blagspruit? So I said, "*Goed,* Esther, thanks for telling me, and now just get out of here so that I can get dressed." Otherwise she'd have dressed me, I swear it. And she gave me a majestic nod, knowing that God had spoken through her to send me to Church, sinner that I was and stinking of cheap *dop* from the night before.

Right. Johannes and I went to *Kerk,* he in a black Sunday suit, if you'd believe such a thing, and saying: "Good morning, Mr. Stein, *goeie more,* Mrs. Van Esslin," a solid and respected member of the congregation, and I thought, poor *kerel,* there but for the grace of God go I, if I had to live in this godforsaken *dorp* stuck in the middle of the Orange Free State. And he looked like death after the *brandewyn,* and so did I, and we sat there swaying and sweating in that blerry little church through a sermon an hour and a half long, while all the faithful gave us nasty curious looks. Then we had a cold lunch, Esther having been worshipping at the kaffir church down in the Location, and we slept it all off and woke

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covered with flies and sweating, and it was as hot as hell, which is what Blagspruit is, hell. And he'd been there ten years, man, ten years. . .

Right. It is Esther's afternoon off, and Johannes says he will make us some tea, but I see he is quite lost without her, so I say, give me a glass of water, and let's get out from under this iron, that's all I ask. He looks surprised, because his hide is hardened to it, but off we go, through the dusty little garden full of marigolds and zinnias, you know those sun-baked gardens with the barbed wire fences and the gates painted dried-blood color in those little dorps stuck in the middle of the veld, enough to make you get drunk even to think of them, but Johannes is sniffing at the marigolds, which stink like turps, and he sticks an orange zinnia in his lapel, and says: "Esther likes gardening." And there we go along the main street, saying good afternoon to the citizens, for half a mile, then we're out in the veld again, just the veld. And we wander about, kicking up the dust and watching the sun sink, because both of us have just one idea, which is: how soon can we decently start sundowning?

Then there was a nasty stink on the air, and it came from a small bird impaled on a thorn on a thorn-tree which was a butcher-bird's cache, have you ever seen one? Every blerry thorn had a beetle or a worm or something stuck on it, and it made me feel pretty sick, coming on top of everything, and I was just picking up a stone to throw at the damned thorn tree, to spite the butcher bird, when I saw Hans staring at a lower part of this tree. On a long black thorn was a great big brown beetle, and it was waving all its six legs and its two feelers in rhythm, trying to claw the thorn out of its middle, or so it looked, and it was writhing and wriggling, so that at last it fell off the thorn, which was at right angles, so to speak, from the soil, and it landed on its back, still waving its legs, trying to up itself. At which Hans bent down to look at it for some time, his two monk's hands on his upper thighs, his bald head sweating and glowing red in the last sunlight. *Then he bent down, picked up the beetle and stuck it back on the thorn.* Carefully, you understand, so that the thorn went back into the hole it had already made, you could see he was trying not to hurt the beetle. I just stood and gaped, like a *domkop,* and I remembered how one used to feel when he leaned forward and said, all earnest and involved: "You say the

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oranges are no good this year? Honestly, is that really true?" Anyway, I said: "Hans, man, for God's sake!" and then he looked at me, and he said, reproachfully, "The ants would have killed it, just look!" Well the ground was swarming with ants of one kind or another, so there was logic in it, but I said "Hans, let's drink man, let's drink."

Well it was Sunday, and no bars open. I took a last look at the beetle, the black thorn through its oozing middle, waving its black legs at the setting sun, and I said, "Back home, Hans, and to hell with Esther, we're going to get drunk."

Esther was in the kitchen, putting out cold meat and tomatoes, and I said: "Esther, you can take the evening off."

She said: "Master Hans, I have had all the Sunday afternoon off talking to Sister Mary." Hans looked helpless at me, and I said: "Esther, I'm giving you the evening off, good night."

And Hans said, stuttering and stammering, "That's right, Esther, I'll give you the evening off. Goodnight Esther."

She looked at him. Then at me. Hey, what a woman, hey, what a queen, man! She said, with dignity: "Good night, Mr. Johannes, good night Mr. du Preez." Then she wiped her hands free of evil on her white apron, and she strode off, singing All Things Bright and Beautiful, and I tell you we felt as if we weren't good enough to wash Esther's *broekies,* and that's the truth.

Goed. We got out the brandy, never mind about the cold meat and the tomatoes, and about an hour later I reached my point at last, which was, what about the poems, and the reason I'd taken so long was I was scared he'd say: "Take a look at Blagspruit man, take a look, is this the place for poems, Martin?" But when I asked, he leaned forward and stared at me, all earnest and intent, then he turned his head carefully to the right, to see if the door into the kitchen was shut, but it wasn't; and then left at the window, and that was open too, and then past me at the door to the verandah. Then he got up on tiptoes and very carefully shut all three, and then he drew the curtains. It gave me the *skriks,* man, I can tell you. Then he went to a great old black chest and took out a Manu Script, because it was all in the beautiful black difficult writing and gave it to me to read. And I sat and slowly worked it out, letter by letter, while he sat opposite, sweating and totting, and giving fearful looks over his shoulders.

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What was it? Well, I was drunk, for one thing, and Hans sitting there all frightened scared me, but it was good, it was good, I promise you. A kind of chronicle of Blagspruit it was, the lives of the citizens—well, need I elaborate, since the lives of citizens are the same everywhere in the world, but worse in Suid Afrika, and worse a million times in Blagspruit. The Manu Script gave off a stink of church and right-doing, with the sin and the evil underneath, it had a medieval stink to it, naturally enough, for what is worse than the *Kerk* in this our Land?—but I'm saying this to you, remember, and I never said it, but what is worse than the stink of the *Kerk* and the god-fearing in this our feudal land?

But the poem. As far as I can remember, because I was full as a tick, it was a sort of prose chronicle that led up to and worked into the poems, you couldn't tell where they began or ended. The prose was stiff and old-fashioned and formal, monk's language, and the poems too. But I knew when I read it it was the best I'd read in years—since I read those poems of his ten years before, man, not since then. And don't forget, God help me, I'm an editor now, and I read poems day and night, and when I come on something like Hans' poems that night I have nothing to say but—*Goed.*

Right. I was working away there an hour or more because of that damned black ornamented script, then I put it down and I said: "Hans, can I ask you a question?" And he looked this way and that over his shoulder first, then leaned forward, the lamplight shining on his pate, and he asked in a low trembling sinner's voice: "What do you want to ask me, Martin?"

I said, "Why this complicated handwriting? What for? It's beautiful, but why this monkey's puzzle?"

And he lowered his voice and said: "It's so that Esther can't read it."

I said: "And what of it, Hans? Why not? Give me some more *brandewyn* and tell me."

He said: "She's a friend of the Predikant's cook, and her Sister Mary works in the Mayor's kitchen."

I saw it all. I was drunk, so I saw it. I got up, and I said: "Hans, you're right. You're right a thousand times. If you're going to write stuff like this, as true and as beautiful as God and all his

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angels, then Esther mustn't read it. But why don't you let me take this back with me and print it in *Onwards*?"

He went white and looked as if I might knife him there and then like a *totsti*. He grabbed the manuscript from me and held it against his fat chest, and he said: "They mustn't see it."

"You're right," I said, understanding him completely.

"It's dangerous keeping it here," he said, darting fearful looks all around.

"Yes, you're right," I said, and I sat down with a bump in my *rimpie* chair, and I said: "Ja, if they found that, Hans. . ."

"They'd kill me," he said.

I saw it, completely.

I was drunk. He was drunk. We put the manuscript *boekie* on the table and we put our arms around each other and we wept for the citizens of Blagspruit. Then we lit the hurricane lamp in the kitchen, and he took his *boekie* under his arm, and we tiptoed out into the moonlight that stank of marigolds, and out we went down the main street, all dark as the pit now because it was after twelve and the citizens were asleep, and we went staggering down the tarmacked street that shone in the moonlight between low dark houses and out into the veld. There we looked sorrowfully at each other and wept some sad brandy tears, and right in front of us, the devil aiding us, was a thorn tree. All virgin it was, its big black spikes lifted up and shining in the devil's moon. And we wept a long time more, and we tore out the pages from his manuscript and we made them into little screws of paper and we stuck them all over the thorns and when there were none left, we sat under the thorn tree in the moonlight, the black spikey thorns making thin purplish shadows all over us and over the white sand. Then we wept for the state of our country and the state of poetry. We drank a lot more brandy, and the ants came after it and us, so we staggered back down the gleaming sleeping main street of Blagspruit, and that's all I remember until Esther was standing over me with a tin tray that had a teapot, teacup, sugar and some condensed milk, and she was saying: "Master du Preez, where is Master Hans?"

I saw the seven o'clock sun outside the window, and I remembered everything and I sat up and I said: "My God!"

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And Esther said, "God has not been in this house since half-past five on Saturday last." And went out.

Right. I got dressed, and went down the main street, drawing looks from the Monday morning citizens, all of whom had probably been watching us staggering along last night from behind their black drawn curtains. I reached the veld and there was Hans. A wind had got up, a hot dust-devilish wind, and it blew about red dust and bits of grit, and leaves and dead grass into the blue sky, and those pale dry bushes that leave their roots and go bouncing and twirling all over the empty sand, like dervishes, round and round, and then up and around, and there was Hans, letting out yelps and cries and shouts, and he was chasing about after screws of paper that were whirling around among all the dust and stuff.

I helped him. The thorn tree had three squirls of paper tugging and blowing from spikes of black thorn, so I collected those, and we ran after the blowing white bits that had the black beautiful script on them, and we got perhaps a third back. Then we sat under the thorn tree, the hard sharp black shadows over us and the sand, and we watched a dust-devil whirling columns of yellow sand and his poems up and off into the sky.

I said: "But Hans, you could write them down again, couldn't you? You couldn't have forgotten them, surely?"

And he said: "But Martin, anyone can read them now, don't you see that man? Esther could come out here next afternoon off, and pick anyone of those poems up off the earth and read it. Or suppose the Predikant or the Mayor got their hands on them?"

Then I understood. I promise you, it had never crossed my *domkop* mind until that moment. I swear it. I simply sat there, sweating out guilt and brandy, and I looked at that poor madman, and then I remembered back ten years and I thought: You idiot. You fool.

Then at last I got intelligent and I said: "But Hans, even if Esther and the Predikant and the Mayor did come out here and pick up your poems, like leaves, off the bushes, they couldn't understand one word, because they are written in that slim black script you worked out for yourself."

I saw his poor crazy face get more happy, and he said: "You think so, Martin? Really? You really think so?"

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I said: "*Ja,* it's the truth." And he got all happy and safe, while I thought of those poems whirling around for ever, or until the next rainstorm, around the blue sky with the dust and the bits of shining grass.

And I said: "Anyway, at the best only perhaps a thousand, or perhaps two thousand people would understand that beautiful *boekie.* Try to look at it that way, Hans, it might make you feel better."

By this time he looked fine, he was smiling and cheered up.

Right.

We got up and dusted each other off, and I took him home to Esther. I asked him to let me take the poems we'd rescued back to publish in *Onwards,* but he got desperate again and said: "No, no, do you want to kill me? Do you want them to kill me? You're my friend, Martin, you can't do that."

So I told Esther that she had a great man in her charge, through whom Heaven itself spoke, and she was right to take such care of him. But she merely nodded her queenly white-*doeked* head and said: "Goodbye, Master du Preez, and may God be with you."

So I came home to Kapstaad.

A week ago I got a letter from Hans, but I didn't see at once it was from him, it was in ordinary writing, like yours or mine, but rather unformed and wild, and it said: "I am leaving this place. They know me now. They look at me. I'm going North to the river. Don't tell Esther. *Jou vriend,* Johannes Potgieter."

Right.

Jou vriend,
Martin du Preez

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POEMS

THE MOUND-BUILDERS

"Macon is the seventh layer of civilization on this spot."
—Inscription at Ocmulgee National Monument.

Let the old poets jig on Penn-
sylvania Avenue, and when the jig ends
let them offer a cracked tune
in praise of power:
the State counts the teeth of its friends.
All month, knee-deep in South,
oiled by Methodist money,
I have whirled to a different music
with oversweet, underdeveloped girls
who make me missionary.
My daughter sits in every class;
love is the tongue in my mouth.
Today through the streets of the Greek Revival
and the confederacy of the lawns
trumpeting with azaleas,
my rented Falcon flies
from the tiresome sound of my own voice,
the courteous chicken sitting on my plate,
and Sidney Lanier's exhausted flute
stuck in its cabinet of glass.
What's best in me lives underground,
rooting and digging, itching for wings;
my very worst imaginings
I give to the spoilers of the air.

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At the National Park under a sky
of unshattered, unshatterable blue
I rejoice in the prevalence of green
and the starry chickweed of the fields;
through the millennial ordeal
part, if only part of me, goes down
to the master farmers who built this mound,
this ceremonial earth-lodge,
and locked an eagle in it, shaped of clay,
the fork-eyed spotted bird of their cult,
and piled their dead in mounds higher and higher,
and raised up temple-mounds
to the giver of breath and corn
on which they stacked the harvest fire
that lit this stage for two hundred years.
Fifteen square miles! They must have known their power
stopped by the willows at the river's edge,
and yet it was too much to hold:
only their ghost-song haunts the field.

Musician of the lost tribes,
you summon to the council-chamber,
to the elders in their scooped-out circle,
an earth-faced chorus of the lost,
people without name to remember,
led by stallion-proud Emperor Brim
bearing his feathered calumet,
chief of the tall Cowetas,
father of the Creek Nation,
by the Spaniards called "Gran Cazique,"
most feared redman of his generation;
forshadowed, as a scroll unwinds,
by potters out of the swamps
who set their mark on the fanciful pipes they smoked
in the figure of birds or humans,
makers of bowls with carinated shoulders;
and their distant cousins, a patient cloud,
upholding jars with a smooth fold of the lip;

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and, more dimly still, the shellfish eaters,
people of the stone axe,
who pitched their noisome camps
on their garbage heaps;
and straggling far behind,
out of primeval murk,
those wandering hunters in search of food
who crossed the land-bridge of the Bering Strait
and sliding over the glacier's edge
paved our first trails with their Mongol bones.
They followed the game that they pursued
into museums of pre-history,
featureless but for the fluted points
dropped from the bloodied mammoth's flanks.

The mounds rise up on every side
of a seven-layered world, as I stand
in the middle of the Ocmulgee fields,
by the Central of Georgia Railway track,
with the Creek braves under my feet
and the City of Macon at my back.

Stanley Kunitz

WOMAN

Young,
you stung
like a blackberry bush. Even feet
armed you, o savage girl.

You were difficult to take.
Young

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even now are you,
and lovely. Signs
of those years of grief solder
our spirits into one. And behind
the extremely black hair that I curl
round my fingers I fear no longer the little
white pointed demoniac ear.

TRIESTE

I have walked through the whole city,
then scaled a slope
populous at the start, deserted farther on,
enclosed by a low wall:
a nook in which to sit
alone; and it seems to me that where it ends,
the city ends.

Trieste has a quarrelsome
grace. If you like it,
it's a tough little kid, with hands too large
to offer flowers;
it's like a jealous
love.
From this slope I can see every church
and every road, whether it leads to the encumbered beach
or to the hill at whose stony top the last house
clings.
A strange air circulates about
everything, a tormenting air,
native air.

For me my city, lively in every part,
has made a nook, and for my shy,
thoughtful life.

Umberto Saba
(translated by Lynne Lawner)

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THE RECLUSE

I

My life is bountiful, although I dwell
Absurdly in it. I am a bird disgracing
This most lovely tree by my poor plumage,
Half grown and badly worn as if unowned.
About me grow such gorgeous blossoms
I have long since called them eyes of God.
On this white tree amid blue flowers of air
I am the only thing improbable.
To my own senses I am all unreal.
This bright world lacing and unlacing
Cannot create me in another sense
But stares out of its luminous blue eyes
Unwondering at my wind-eaten wings.

II

I live beside a stream that does not flow,
And I have grown as still as my profound
And household river. I am as cold as ice
And do not know how light inhabits me
Making my heart a crystal cave, untenanted
By anything but glory. I do well know
That, underneath, the sea searches the stream
And claims it, beyond all power to contain
Its meanings, or withold its tearless well
From ocean's fields, resalted by the rock
The name of which is always Niobe.
And by this sign I know that I shall love
Again, and thereby grow both swift and dark.

III

My house is older than my life and therefore
A continual instruction. Through it
Pours the song of birds as if it were
Not there. I read in Ovid at my table

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How men were changed from being men
To something less deceivable, and I
Am changed by solitude until the light
Lives through me and my body is no more
A breeder of shadow. On darker days
The rain inhabits me, dim without sorrow
And chill without love. From my reverie
Woodpeckers wake me with their stony bills
Searching in the rotten walls for food.

IV

In especial I am hunted by Apollo
Who loved Daphne, Daphne who became
A tree. I follow her across the fields
Crying, "I am the god of wisdom offering
Knowledge of the past, and of the present
And of what from the dark source beyond us
Is yet to flow." And I too see her run
With the dark certitude of a natural thing
Knowing this is not love, whatever
Love may be, that at her back cries out
I am a god. Her father was a river
In the vale of Tempe who changed her
Into laurel which is forever green.

V

Something has nested in the chimney
And makes a phantom fire with the roaring
Of its wings, stirring the ashes on the stone
In the act of comforting. I warm myself
At night beside this fire, and listen to
The song in the nest that floats above me like
The sea that lives and does not live in shells.
And who will tell me that I do not pray
(Being unfashionable) with the profoundest right
Of a deserted man to that vague thing
Which has usurped my empty hearth and altar
And is a common bird, and yet unknown
To me except by cries, and by the breath of wings.

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VI

Wild iris, the hidden violet, and clover
And a dozen jewels nameless to me
Rise in the rank pasture by the river.
What is more real? And these too evening
Encompasses, and night devours altogether.
Fireflies remember the nightly death
Of flowers, luring the wanderer by the river
Tranced in the fire of memory and the dew
To consecrate himself to quest for those
Ten thousand grails. I am not the knight
Of flowers. I am the beast rather
Seen by Gahereth drinking of the river
From whose belly issued the cry of dogs.

VII

Much has been said in dispraise of memory
And I deny it all. I shall not live
In this place long—the meditation
On the signs and sacred images of desire
Has an end. This place I shall revisit
On the shrunken stream in autumn coming up
The current in an old tin boat to where
My house untenanted is hid by fainting blooms
Suffered by summer to grow much too long.
And I will greet the god of the place
With temperate rejoicing and call him by the name
I knew when last I loved—and for the dance
The hamadryads will forsake their trees.

VIII

What is this wind which twists all,
Letting nothing be final or blooming,
But all, at once, rooted and wandering?
Is this the hour and the minute of the end,
When the gigantic oak goes straying on the land
And streams withdraw to caverns underground?
Far inland I behold the driven gull

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Afloat upon the frothing crests of trees
As on the uninhabitable sea
And I am paralyzed with loneliness
And cannot think except to cry aloud
Holds the wide world any slim and glittering thing
For which my heart's need has not a use and gratefulness.

Allen Grotsman

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EDITORS' NOTE

ON EICHMANN AND THE JEWS

Hannah Arendt's daringly speculative book, Eichmann in Jerusalem, *has provoked as much controversy as any other work we can think of in the last decade. Clearly what is involved is not only the validity of Miss Arendt's argument, but the whole question of political and moral responsibility—a question that Miss Arendt is not afraid to pursue to unpopular conclusions. Lionel Abel's piece, which opens a discussion of this question in* PR, *is not intended as a review: it was submitted as a frank polemic. The editors themselves do not agree on the merits of the arguments in Miss Arendt's book or Mr. Abel's criticism of it. Miss Arendt's writing has frequently been published in* PR, *and she is a distinguished member of the intellectual community which it represents and is responsible to. However, one of the functions of the magazine is to keep discussion going, even when it challenges some of the assumptions and positions with which* PR *is associated, including direct criticism of its own policies. For the next issue Daniel Bell has undertaken to write about* Eichmann in Jerusalem, *and the questions it brings up, from a different point of view. Pieces by Dwight Macdonald and other writers will also appear in the next and following issues. Readers are invited to comment.*

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Lionel Abel

THE AESTHETICS OF EVIL

HANNAH ARENDT ON EICHMANN AND THE JEWS

Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* covers not only the Eichmann trial, but much more importantly, the background for it: the dealings of Eichmann with his chosen victims, the Jewish Councils, or *Judenrate,* in Nazi-occupied Europe. Now I shall not examine Miss Arendt's treatment of the trial but concern myself only with her judgments of Eichmann and of the Councils. Fundamentally, I think she accepts the justice of the Israeli court; her reservations about the trial have to do only with legal niceties, the unseemly interruptions of spectators, Prosecutor Hausner's rhetoric and reasoning, and his final summation to the judges, for which Miss Arendt substitutes a final summation of her own.

What is important in the book concerns the background of the trial, and about this Miss Arendt makes two main assertions: (1) that the Jewish Councils, set up by the Nazis in Europe, were their irreplaceable instruments in the drive to destroy European Jewry, and (2) that Eichmann himself was an utterly replaceable instrument in the program, a mere cog in the machine.

Now the faults of omission in Miss Arendt's effort to back up these contentions are very grave, often graver even than her frequent misstatements of fact (some of which have already been set forth in a fine article by Marie Syrkin in *The Jewish Frontier,* May,

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1963). I shall begin with what is after all a rather minor omission and then go on to what in my judgment is a major one. In treating of the deportations of Jews from Belgium, Miss Arendt asserts that only foreign Jews were deported from Belgium and not a single Belgian Jew; her explanation is that no *Judenrat* existed in Belgium, that the existence of a *Judenrat* to register Jews was "one of the most important prerequisites for their seizure." Now according to Raul Hilberg,[1] the authority Miss Arendt has relied on chiefly, *L'Association des Juifs Belgiques* was set up in Belgium in 1941. Strictly speaking, this was not a *Judenrat,* since it was not set up by the Germans; all the same, it was an organization of Jews subject to Nazi directives, and it shows the presence of a Jewish leadership in Belgium. (Miss Arendt throughout her book passes lightly over the difference between a Jewish leadership spontaneously organized and a Jewish leadership selected by the Nazis.) In any case, she gives its absence as a most important reason for the fact that not a single Belgian Jew was deported, whereas she must know, since she cites Raul Hilberg throughout her book, that *L'Association des Juifs Belgiques* existed in Belgium until that country was liberated by the Allies.

As I said, this is a minor omission. Here is one I call major: Between November of 1941 and June of 1942, over half a million Russian Jews were killed in the Ukraine by the firing squads of the *Einsatzgruppen* at the rate of one hundred thousand a month. Miss Arendt must be aware of the fact, for she has noted in her book that the *Einsatzgruppen* were used especially in Russia and she even mentions that some two hundred and fifty thousand Jews were killed there in one year by a single *Einsatzgruppen* squad. But there were no *Judenräte* in Russia during the first wave of killings; there was no Jewish leadership; Jewish organizations of any kind had been destroyed by Stalin long before the war.

Surely Miss Arendt should have considered this fact, examined it, dealt with it, tried to explain it away. How could she not have done so in good conscience, since she says in her book that the existence of a Jewish leadership was so necessary to Nazi success in killing Jews?

1. See Raul Hilberg's careful, massive, and valuable study: *The Destruction of European Jewry.*

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Here is the testimony of the anti-partisan chief and top SS and police leader for Russia, Von dem Bach, who, as Hilberg notes, observed the Jews and killed them until the end: ". . . the appalling fact was that they (the Jews in Russia) had no organization whatsoever. The mass of Jewish people were taken completely by surprise. They did not know at all what to do; they had no directives or slogans as to how they should act . . . they had no organization of their own at all, not even an information service."

I wondered when I read Miss Arendt's book why she had not dealt with the killing of Jews in Russia, since she did take up, and in much detail, the manner in which the Jews of so many other European countries were killed. Raul Hilberg's book—which does not neglect to treat it—suggests one answer: Had Miss Arendt dealt with the killing of the Jews in Russia, she would have had to abandon her whole thesis that so much of the responsibility for the deaths of so many Jews rests finally with their own leadership.

But it is Miss Arendt's desire to maximize the role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of European Jewry. Any facts which would tend to make their role merely relative, she is inclined to ignore, or to play down.

What is the truth of the matter? Why did the Nazis set up the Jewish Councils? And why did representative Jews become members of these Councils? Now certainly the Nazis set up the Jewish Councils in order to serve their own purposes. This goes without saying. On the other hand, organizations of Jews set up by the Nazis may very well have thought it was possible to make use of their privileged position to save not only themselves and their families but other Jews also. Miss Marie Syrkin has given, I think, a very good explanation of how the members of these Jewish Councils justified themselves: "In most cases the Councils viewed themselves honestly as a buffer between German savagery and the helpless ghetto. Someone had to be responsible for the distribution of rations, such as they were; some type of organization had to exist among the thousands—500,000 in Warsaw—immured within the ghetto walls if chaos were not to be complete and immediate; and grimmest of all, any disobedience of a Nazi directive meant the entrance of storm-troopers shooting and seizing indiscriminately." I am persuaded of the human truth of this explanation.

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However, Miss Syrkin's idea as to why Jews were ready to participate in the Jewish Councils does not explain why the Nazis wanted these Councils formed. Certainly the Nazis did not order them set up so as to "interpose a buffer between German savagery and the helpless ghetto." Why then did the Nazis want Jewish Councils? According to Miss Arendt, in order to expedite the extermination of Jews. But if Von dem Bach's evidence, already cited, about the ease of killing unorganized Jews in Russia is taken into account—and I think the testimony of an SS general about what made for simplicity in the killing of hundreds of thousands of Jews must be taken as more authoritative than Miss Arendt's, then her notion that the Jewish Councils were so essential to the Nazis must be set aside. Why then did the Nazis want the Councils? This matter, of which Miss Arendt makes a mystery, Raul Hilberg makes perfectly clear. Some four and a half million people cannot be killed all at once; while numbers of Jews were being killed the Germans wanted (1) to ensure order among the remaining Jews and (2) to get able-bodied Jews to work for them, especially in the arms industries. And the need of the German military for industrial workers created a split in the Nazi hierarchy; would it not be senseless, it was argued in top Nazi circles, to kill Jews who could make arms for Germany? On the other hand, the Jewish leaders, realizing that the Germans needed workers, had some rational grounds for collaborating. Their hope was that the Nazis would not be so senseless as to destroy a valuable labor force. Chaim Rumkowski of Lodz, for instance, who was known as the Führer of that city, and whom Miss Arendt mentions only to ridicule for his buffoonish and dictatorial traits, had a plan for dealing with the Germans, which I, even today, cannot regard as irrational. He called his plan "Rescue Through Work"; his idea was that the Germans would allow the Jews of his ghetto to live if they worked hard and well for them. And it must be said for Chaim that the ghetto over which he ruled lasted longer than any other in Eastern Europe, in fact until August of 1944, when the war was almost over. Then Hitler (who we know now was clinically insane by that time) ordered the extermination of the Lodz ghetto, including its able-bodied workers. Few in the Nazi hierarchy or in the military high command were in favor of this senseless decision. Now how could Rumkowski have

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known in advance that Hitler's decision about the remaining Jews in Lodz would be so senseless or so mad? Chaim had been a brutal and unscrupulous servant of the Nazis. But it is said that when he saw at last that his plan had failed, he voluntarily got on one of the vans headed for the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Certainly Miss Arendt should have told the whole story of the Lodz ghetto.

But just as she omits those facts which would serve to explain the behavior of the Jewish Councils, she has omitted facts which would serve to extenuate their actions. She does mention the one instance, toward the end of the war, of allied intervention to save Jewish lives: Roosevelt's threat to Hungary that it would not be treated as a civilized nation if the deportation of Jews from that country were not stopped. But she does not mention the various previous occasions when the leaders of the Jewish Councils begged the Allies to intervene for the Jews by bombing trains so that deportees could escape and threatening harsh treatment after allied victory if the deportations were not stopped. On these occasions, which Miss Arendt does not mention, but which Hilberg does not fail to, the leaders of the Councils got no response from the Allies. Now surely their isolation from the West must be taken into account in any reasonable judgment of their cooperation with the Germans.

Making her terrible charge against the Jewish leaders, Miss Arendt yet does not feel obliged to make the charge specific. Charging them with collaborating in the destruction of their fellow Jews, she never specifies why they did so. Was it out of political stupidity or moral baseness? Sometimes she implies that the Jewish leaders were merely stupid in helping their own destroyers; at other times that they were receiving material benefits beyond the hope of personal survival. When she mocks Kastner for having sacrificed over four hundred thousand lives in order to save a few more than a thousand, one does not know whether to weep over the disproportion between the numbers of the saved and the slain, or whether to regard Kastner as a fool or a knave. In fact Miss Arendt's figures are false; Kastner by his ransoming operation saved some eighteen thousand Jews; moreover his ransoming operation had nothing whatever to do with the deportations and exterminations directed by Eichmann. Kastner negotiated the ransom

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of certain Jews, but this did not involve the sacrifice of a single Jewish life, let alone over four hundred thousand, as is made clear in the decision of the highest court in Israel.

At times Miss Arendt seems to be saying that the Jewish leaders should not have cooperated with the Nazis at all, but she never takes up concretely what refusal to cooperate with the Nazis would have meant in any particular instance or how it could have been organized under surveillance and amid hostile anti-semitic peoples. At times Miss Arendt seems to be saying that non-cooperation would have been possible had there not been in Europe any organized forms of Jewish life, since the absence of organized forms of social life might have hampered the Nazis in their extermination program. Miss Arendt writes: "The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between five and six million." Against this judgment of Miss Arendt's, it might be sufficient to recall the judgment of the SS officer in Russia, previously cited, in which he claimed that the lack of any Jewish organizations in Russia simplified the killing operations of the *Einsatzgruppen*. But let us suppose Miss Arendt to be correct on this point and disregard for a moment the testimony of a really professional mass murderer. What if the existing forms of Jewish life in Europe, outside of Russia, did in fact aid the Nazis in their destruction of European Jewry? But to make this possibility an accusation is like accusing the Jews of having existed, for where there is a people and that people is allowed to express itself—the Jews in Russia under Stalin were not—there will necessarily be representative leaders and organized forms of social life. One might as well accuse the people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima for having made their own deaths possible, since they lived in cities, and cities make the best targets. What then is the charge of Miss Arendt against the leaders of the Jewish Councils? It must be their policies and not their existence that she questions. And why did they collaborate with the Nazis? Were they politically blind? Or were they simply base? One does not know from her account.

And there is another really fundamental matter, about which Miss Arendt has not even ventured to speculate. What did the members of the Jewish Councils think of their own activity in co-

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operating with the Nazis? No doubt the Germans succeeded in concealing from the Councils for a time how they were using them to expedite the extermination of Jews. But at some point the members of the Councils must have realized what was happening and the nature of the role they were playing. What did the Jewish leaders then say to justify their acts? One would like to know. The Jews are a people who throughout their history are known to have clung tenaciously to life. But Miss Arendt has presented a very contrary picture of European Jews as led by either knaves or fools bent on facilitating their destruction. Unable to accept this picture of the Jews, but without knowledge of what actually took place in Europe, my wonder was aroused, and as a result of it, I discovered that there is documentary evidence about what the leaders of the Jewish Councils said to one another during the crucial moments of the Nazi extermination drive and also about what they said to other leaders representing political factions within the Jewish community. I have it on the authority of Dr. Jacob Robinson, special assistant to Justice Jackson at the Nurenberg Trials and to Prosecutor Hausner in the preparation of the case against Eichmann, that there are some eight monographs in Yiddish and in Hebrew on the discussions of the Councils' leaders with left-wing Zionists and with Socialists, and that in these discussions the liveliest differences of class and political viewpoint were reflected. Now I have not been able to examine these monographs myself; they are yet to be translated. But I have it again on the authority of Dr. Robinson that in these discussions, outright defiance of the Nazis was proposed by more than one political group. What arguments were given then by the Council leaders, one would like to know, in favor of their own continued collaboration? Now I, for one, am not at all sure that the arguments for collaboration might not have been more logical and might not have held out more hope for survival than the arguments for resistance, armed or otherwise. The Jewish leaders of the Councils might have argued, for instance, that immediate resistance would be met with immediate destruction, and that collaboration with the Nazis at least held out the hope that the war might be terminated before Eichmann could complete his program. How could this argument have been met, one wonders, given the circumstances? And there is this ironical fact to be con-

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sidered: The only point of view which could have been expressed against that of the Council leaders—assuming I am right about what their point of view was—would have had to be a view not exclusively concerned with the survival of the Jews, but rather with some other political or ideological value, for the sake of which those Jews committed to it might have called upon the entire Jewish population to sacrifice themselves immediately in order to do some damage—which could not have been great, in any case—to the Nazi war machine. The horror and the irony of the situation may be expressed thus: It was probably the leaders in the Jewish Councils, the very men who were surrendering Jews to the Nazis for extermination, who represented in the discussions with Socialists and left-wing Zionists the value of saving the lives of Jews above all other considerations.

Miss Arendt evidently did not investigate whether any such discussions took place or speculate on what arguments might have been employed. And she limits herself to the description of the sensational facts, which, while they add to our nausea, add nothing to our clarity about what actually happened in Nazi Europe and why the Jewish leaders behaved as they did. Miss Arendt writes: "In Amsterdam as in Warsaw, in Berlin as in Budapest, Jewish officials could be trusted to compile the lists of persons and of their property, to secure money from the deportees to defray the expenses of their deportation and extermination, to keep track of vacated apartments, to supply police forces to help seize Jews and get them on trains, until, as a last gesture, they handed over the assets of the Jewish community in good order for final confiscation. They distributed the Yellow Star badges, and sometimes, as in Warsaw, 'the sale of the armbands became a regular business; there were ordinary armbands of cloth and fancy plastic armbands which were washable.' In the Nazi-inspired, but not Nazi-dictated, manifestos they issued, we still can sense how they enjoyed their new power—'The Central Jewish Council has been granted the right of absolute disposal over all Jewish spiritual and material wealth and over all Jewish manpower'—as the first announcement of the Budapest Council phrased it." (About the Budapest Council's statement: How does Miss Arendt know that the Jewish leaders enjoyed making their pronouncement, which she admits the Nazis required them to make? And how, I wonder, could

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they phrase what the Nazis required them to say with pathos or with resignation?)

But out of all these sad stories nothing emerges to prove Miss Arendt's charges against the leaders of the Jewish Councils: only a picture of these leaders which renders their actions both inexplicable and ugly. The strangest and most shocking feature of Miss Arendt's accusations is that they are never political, never moral. To make moral or political judgments one has to investigate and discuss the actual political and moral alternatives, and this Miss Arendt has not done in attacking the leaders of the Councils. Her judgment of them is, I think, fundamentally an aesthetic one.

II

Miss Arendt's judgment of Eichmann too is fundamentally an aesthetic judgment. And this is the reason he comes off so much better in her book than do his victims—to the great surprise of so many of the author's readers. If a man holds a gun at the head of another and forces him to kill his friend, the man with the gun will be aesthetically less ugly than one who out of fear of death has killed his friend and perhaps did not even save his own life. But one wonders: Is a purely aesthetic judgment the proper one to make in such a case? And if we turn from a matter like the killing of one or two men by a single murderer, however devilish, to the extermination of approximately five million people, does it seem proper that the executioner and his host of victims should be judged in aesthetic rather than in moral or political terms?

In aestheticizing Eichmann, Miss Arendt was aided by a fact of experience which Simone de Beauvoir called attention to in analyzing the trial of Laval after the war, a trial not so dissimilar to Eichmann's, since in both cases the verdict was a foregone conclusion. In which case, how could it be just? But Madame de Beauvoir's point was a different one. She pointed rather to the fact that the Laval on trial was not the same man who had enjoyed power. In the defendent's box there was a weak, tired old man, one not even convinced that what he had done politically was right. Because he was so weak, with the press and the people against him, he could be tried, sentenced, and executed. But the Laval whom it was important in the name of justice to try, sentence,

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and execute was not the Laval of 1946, but the Laval of 1940 to 1945, the Laval who had enjoyed influence and power, who had been a partner, though a junior one, in Hitler's enterprises. The impossibility of real justice, Simone de Beauvoir pointed out, is always that the criminal on the dock can never be the same person that he was when he committed his crimes. Would that he could be punished when glorying in his deeds, with his guilt full-blown upon him! But he can only be tried when he is caught and already defeated. And it is only then that you can punish him. The man you really wanted to punish has, in a way, escaped.

No doubt Miss Arendt is aware of this penetrating and right analysis of the difficulty of retributive justice made by Simone de Beauvoir. Certainly it is one of the best things in existentialist literature, which I am sure Miss Arendt knows at least as well as I do. Yet she projects the Eichmann on trial for his life back into the past when he was in charge of the extermination of some four-and-a-half to six million Jews, as if the two Eichmanns, the one pleading not to be executed and the one invested with the power to execute so many others were exactly the same person. There is no other Eichmann for her besides the one she saw in the prisoner's dock, unless perhaps the Eichmann who, early in his career as a Nazi had been instructed by his superiors to read Herzl's *Judenstaat,* and "had been converted . . . immediately and forever to Zionism." Now Miss Arendt's effort to present Eichmann as a convinced adherent of the Zionist ideology is, as Marie Syrkin has shown in the article I have already referred to,[2] completely unconvinc-

2. Miss Arendt gives two arguments for Eichmann's Zionism: (1) that he was in favor at one time during the war of resettling the Jews of Europe in some part of Europe, and (2) that he had dealings during the war with Zionists, whom he allowed to circulate freely in Nazi-dominated territory. Syrkin has destroyed these arguments "In the pre-extermination stage (what Miss Arendt describes as the 'Zionist' stage), the Nazi high command, among them Eichmann, debated the possibility of concentrating expelled Jews in some region of Eastern Europe instead of killing them outright: they would perish more slowly and work for the Nazis in the meantime." Miss Syrkin's comment on why Miss Arendt should identify the resettlement scheme cited above with "Zionism" seems to me perfectly justified. ". . . but the . . . parallel between Eichman's 'dream' of a Devil's Island and Herzl's vision of a Jewish state, of the Nazis' expulsion and concentrations of their captives

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ing. For quite obviously a man in charge of the extermination of all European Jewry could hardly have been committed "forever" to the Zionist ideology. The Zionists could hardly be assisted by millions of Jewish corpses; their need was for living Jews. But what is most striking in Miss Arendt's picture of Eichmann is her omission of any reference to the man's ideology; he was a Nazi and most certainly must have been imbued with Nazi ideology to achieve the position he attained in the Nazi hierarchy; the hatred of Jews was an essential part of this ideology. Now instead of depicting Eichmann as ideological, Miss Arendt insists on describing the man as a comical, mediocre, and dutiful servant of Hitler, whose word for him, according to Miss Arendt, was law. Now Miss Syrkin has pointed out the many facts Miss Arendt glossed over, to arrive at such a judgment of Eichmann: Her picture of him is the very one Eichmann himself presented in Jerusalem at his trial. Now obviously he could not have justified himself morally or politically; thus his only tactic was to present himself as not such a bad fellow after all, as a mere administrator with a high sense of duty, who had done what his superiors had told him to do in service to a regime whose objectives at the time he could not even suspect were evil. Why did Eichmann not suspect that the killing of so many defenseless persons was evil? This Miss Arendt never tries to explain. She says that Eichmann deceived himself, like the eighty million other Germans subject to Hitler's orders. That the eighty million other Germans deceived themselves about what was happening in the Reich and in Nazi occupied Europe may be perfectly true. But what did Eichmann

for their destruction with the hope, even if mistaken, of Jewish revival is out of the realm of decent argument." On Miss Arendt's second point, that Eichmann allowed Zionists to come and go practically as they pleased in Nazi Europe, Miss Syrkin's answer is equally decisive: "Joel Brand had tried to negotiate with regard to the ransom of a million Jews for ten thousand trucks. Only a few Zionist leaders, such as Brand, were allowed into Nazi territory for a brief period . . . during which the hopeless negotiations were conducted. . . ." Marie Syrkin points out too, that they were permitted to circulate during the negotiations, but only as long as the exchange of prisoners for trucks was considered by the Nazis. Miss Syrkin writes: "Miss Arendt manages to imply that 'Zionists' as such were a privileged group enjoying Nazi favor, instead of being the spearheads of whatever resistance to the extermination program was offered."

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deceive himself about? This Miss Arendt does not even try to say. Obviously Eichmann knew at the very least about what he himself was doing; he was involved in the vastest murder enterprise in all of history. But Miss Arendt does not distinguish between the man she saw on the prisoner's dock and the man who sent millions to their death. When certain European Jews, who had had dealings with Eichmann when he was in a subaltern position and afterwards when he was the High Chief Executioner of Jews, said on the witness stand that he was quite different in his very different posts, at first he had seemed to them like an insignificant clerk, but later like a "master of life and of death," Miss Arendt demurs. She insists on seeing Eichmann as forever an insignificant clerk—just as she says he was converted forever by reading Herzl to the vision of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Miss Arendt gives a brief biography of Eichmann, but in so doing, steadfastly refuses to consider any of the major decisions he had to make in his career in the light of any political or moral categories, except perhaps one, dutifulness, and this, of course, is a positive value. In the main, the categories Miss Arendt relies on in describing Eichmann are purely aesthetic. He is commonplace, without humor, comical. Now since one cannot explain the significant decisions a person makes in life in terms of aesthetic categories—people do not act in order to be commonplace or comical, however commonplace or comical they are in acting—every decisive step Eichmann took toward his final role as executioner of the Jews appears to have been taken for him by chance, or by the decision of others. During his four years of high school he joined the youth section of an anti-republican organization of war veterans; this was of course a right wing, reactionary group. Why did he join it? Miss Arendt gives no explanation. Why did he join the Nazi Party? Miss Arendt writes: "At any rate, he did not enter the Party out of conviction, nor was he ever convinced by it—whenever he was asked to give his reasons, he repeated the same embarrassed clichés about the Treaty of Versailles and unemployment; rather as he pointed out in court, 'it was like being swallowed up by the Party against all expectations and without previous decision. It happened so quickly and suddenly.' He had no time and less desire to be informed, he

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did not even know the Party's program, he never read *Mein Kampf* . . . that was about all there was to it."

Miss Arendt does remark that this "was not all there was to it." But in filling out the picture Eichmann gave of himself in Jerusalem, a picture which Miss Arendt in the main accepts, she adds, to explain why he joined the Nazis, merely that he was a frustrated man, already a failure in the eyes of his social class and his family, and that from "a humdrum life without significance or consequence the wind had blown him into History . . ." But she says not a word about the political views Eichmann held, as if it were ridiculous to think of a man like this as having views of any sort. And so with each succeeding step in his career: his admission to the SS, his assignment to the Jewish department, his rise in prominence, his presence among the elite who heard Heydrich announce Hitler's decision for a "final solution," his assignment to carry out that decision and organize the unprecedented murders. Is it possible, one wonders, to describe such a career with scarcely a single reference to a moral decision or to any personal preference for certain political ideas rather than others? Now there is one fatal flaw in Miss Arendt's reasoning on this point: her claim that Eichmann had read Herzl's *Judenstaat* and been converted to Zionism, in her own words, "forever." So the man was capable of forming political views, even very unusual ones for a middle-class German in his circumstances. Apparently he thought about Zionism. Did he never think about Hitlerism?

As I said, Miss Arendt does rely on one moral category in analyzing Eichmann, and this is the category of dutifulness: of course, dutifulness is not a dynamic category; it explains only why one continues to serve, not why one has elected to serve a particular program, a particular master. In any case, it is insufficient to account for the various changes in Eichmann's career, and the choices he had to make at decisive moments in it. And as for the aesthetic categories Miss Arendt relies on in the main to account for his actions, they render him finally inexplicable, just as her purely aesthetic judgment of the leaders of the Jewish Councils renders their actions, as I have already shown, inexplicable also, the only difference being that Eichmann, under Miss Arendt's treatment, comes off as considerably less ugly.

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III

I want now to turn from Miss Arendt's judgment of Eichmann, which I think cannot be credited, and try to judge the man myself in the moral and political terms in which it is appropriate he be judged. Once Eichmann is judged morally and politically, it should be perfectly clear that the contention of Prosecutor Hausner that Eichmann was a moral monster will be seen to be a valid and intelligent one, while Miss Arendt's judgment of Eichmann as an insignificant and commonplace official will be seen to be perverse and arbitrary. If you judge Eichmann aesthetically, he may not seem a monster, but this is no way to make such a judgment.

Watching Eichmann in the Jerusalem court, Miss Arendt did not detect in the man's gestures or style of speech any indication that he was more than a mediocre fellow. She writes: "Despite all the efforts of the prosecution, everyone could see that this man was not a 'monster.' " Now I should like to know if Miss Arendt thinks moral monstrousness is something exhibitable, like good looks, wit, a fine voice. Are there not real talents—I am thinking of talents positively good—for which there is no evidence whatever except the result of their exercise? Who has not met an eminent artist or scientist and not been disappointed because the great man did not exhibit on the spot the talent that was his secret? Now as I see it, the moral formation of a person is the least evident or visible thing about him. Only in a fantasy like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can the real vices of a person be visibly expressed, as Dorian Gray's successive sins appeared on his portrait. To be sure, the writer who wishes to present a villain in a novel or in a play will supply his character with words to express the character's villainy. But now when Eichmann is quoted as saying something which certainly expressed monstrosity of soul as, for instance, the remark which, according to Miss Arendt herself, he kept repeating long after the war, "I will jump into my grave laughing because the fact that I have the death of five million Jews on my conscience gives me extraordinary satisfaction." Miss Arendt counters that this remark of Eichmann was just "bragging," and bragging is, after all, a "common vice." But in noting the

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commonness of bragging, Miss Arendt ignored completely the content of Eichmann's brag. How many people in the history of the world have ever boasted of having killed five million people?

Do we not have traditional moral norms by which we can judge Eichmann's actions? Greek thought, which still affects our moral evaluations, maintained that if a man kills another man even by accident his soul is stained by the act. Consider then a man who has killed approximately five million people without having meant to do so. Would not his soul, from the Greek view, be stained indeed? A man with such a past would have been considered accursed, for how could he have been so unlucky? But Adolf Eichmann did not kill his millions of Jews by chance or accident. The highest position he ever held in life was to be in charge of their execution. How could the man not have been morally monstrous? And all the more a monster if he did not know he was one! But when the Lutheran minister Heinrich Grüber testified that in his dealings with Eichmann he found him like a "block of ice" and like "marble," Miss Arendt, as Marie Syrkin notes, dismisses the minister's description of Eichmann, saying that Grüber was full of "pat judgments."

Against a moral judgment of Eichmann's character, which I think would have to call it monstrous, Miss Arendt pits her own fundamentally aesthetic judgment of the man, which points mainly to his comical characteristics. And Eichmann was indeed in some sense a clown, which Miss Arendt is easily able to show by a number of interesting anecdotes about him, most of which ring true to me. But is there any contradiction between being morally monstrous and also comical? I am inclined to think that there is none, that anyone who considers the comical traits of Iago and Richard III must be of my opinion. And speaking of Shakespeare's villains, I am reminded that T. S. Eliot once said that Parolles, the clownish intermediary in *All's Well That Ends Well,* seemed more sinister and frightening to him than Shakespeare's gigantic villains. Let me add that Soren Kierkegaard, whose moral discriminations were so extraordinary, also saw no contradiction between the morally monstrous and the comical. In describing Judas, Kierkegaard says he must have been the sort of man who, when being paid for selling

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out Jesus, would have requested that the money be not given him all at once, lest he spend it foolishly. Now to me this comical picture of Judas in no way renders his character less sinister. I, for one, see little difference between the comical Judas Kierkegaard described and the comical Eichmann Miss Arendt has described: I see only a difference between the norms of judgment employed.

IV

Can we today judge the leaders of the Jewish Councils politically or morally? Miss Arendt's judgment of them, I said, was that of a political and moral aesthete. Now to judge the Jewish leaders we have to imagine ourselves in their situation and ask ourselves what we ourselves would have done had we been in their place. And this, of course, requires that we ask what our own moral and political ideas are now, or were at the time the leaders of the Councils, under the pressure of terrible events, made the decisions they did. I know that in Miss Arendt's book, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism,* published in 1951, she claimed that political resistance to any totalitarian state (did she not mean between '41-'44?) was quite impossible; even moral resistance was impossible, since such states had the power to render moral opposition to them ambiguous and without significant result; she held, too, that this impossibility applied not only to minority groups in totalitarian states, denied the rights of citizenship, but even to the nationals of such states. What Hannah Arendt said in *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* was that individuals are so atomized by these states that resistance to them must be morally meaningless and politically without result. Miss Arendt wrote:

> Totalitarian terror achieved its most terrible triumph when it succeeded in cutting the moral person off from the individualist escape and in making the decisions of conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal. When a man is faced with the alternative of betraying and thus murdering his friends or of sending his wife and children, for whom he is in every sense responsible, to their deaths; when even suicide would mean the immediate murder of his own family—how is he to decide? The alternative is no longer between good and evil, but between murder and murder.

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I want to ask Miss Arendt now: what were the alternatives before the leaders of the Jewish Councils between 1941 and 1944? Could they have chosen between good and evil? But in 1951 you wrote that no one under a totalitarian state had any choice except between murder and murder.

Yet today Miss Arendt in an interview with a *Newsweek* reporter, defending the position she took in *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* condemns even more explicitly than she did in her book the leaders of the Jewish Councils: They should have told the Jews they could not help them, they could only share their fate. But, the interviewer then wanted to know, what should the Jews have done? To this question Miss Arendt replied: they should have gone underground. But a whole people cannot go into clandestinity; a whole people cannot hide. And does Miss Arendt suppose that the Jews never thought of hiding? I quote from Raul Hilberg: "In Galicia the Jews were particularly aware of their fate because they had already witnessed the mobile killing operations in 1941. In the words of the SS and the police report, they 'tried every means in order to dodge evacuation.' They concealed themselves in 'every imaginable quarter, in pipes, chimneys, even in sewers.' They 'built barricades in passages of catacombs, in cellars enlarged to dugouts, in underground holes, in cunningly contrived hiding places, in attics, and sheds.' . . . The Germans in Galicia proceeded without restraint." And how could the Jews of Warsaw—between ghetto walls—have gone underground?

Let me repeat once again: Miss Arendt's book *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* strongly stressed the impossibility of effective resistance to totalitarian rule. Had her book been written and read and credited during the war, there would have been no underground resistance movements anywhere in Europe—and certainly no underground movement of European Jews. Had *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* been read and believed true in East Germany before 1954, there would have been no Berlin uprising. Had it been read and believed in Poland and in Hungary before 1956, there would have been no Hungarian or Polish revolutions, and Miss Arendt, in 1957, would have not had to write an epilogue for a new edition of her book so as to explain how the Hungarian revolt could have taken place. Every position Miss Arendt maintained in her book on

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totalitarianism she would today have to retract and deny in order to seriously criticize the decisions made by the leaders of the Jewish Councils between 1941 and 1944.

But to return to the question I raised: Can we in 1963 judge the actions of the leaders of the Jewish Councils morally or politically? Certainly Miss Arendt cannot. But anyone who today holds, or who held in 1941, political views broader than those obtaining in the Jewish Councils, composed of people recruited mainly from the middle class—another fact which Miss Arendt does not mention—may indeed criticize the Council leaders for not having had a wider political outlook, for not having been concerned with any other problem than the survival of the Jews. What one cannot today criticize the Jewish leaders for is that they failed to help the Jews survive; nobody knows what, under the circumstances, could have ensured their survival. But Miss Arendt's criticism of the Jewish leaders is not at all that they were limited, narrow, parochial in their views; she articulates no views wider than they had themselves; her criticism is the one criticism which is inadmissable: they did not ensure Jewish survival.

What is most surprising, though, about Miss Arendt's attack on the Jewish leaders is that the extremity of their situation, which she in her new book now seems to imply was not so extreme, is the one and only fact which gives some justification for the views she expressed in *On the Origins of Totalitarianism*—and then wrongly applied to all groups in totalitarian states. I can imagine the leaders of the Jewish Councils replying to Miss Arendt from their graves: "Are you attacking us for not having liberated ourselves from views you yourself maintained long after we died? We had no chance to fight your Total State with success. Why attack us? Why not attack the Hungarians or the Poles, whose revolts against their totalitarian governments belie your whole theory? The extremity of our situation is the only excuse for your having formed your theory." I do not see how Miss Arendt could answer such a reproach.

V

Let us go back to Miss Arendt's judgment of Eichmann and ask again why she insists on regarding him as merely a mediocre and

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comical individual. I think her reasons for regarding him in that way are not to be found in her biography of him, but in her book which said that totalitarianism is all powerful. It is not, as events have shown. In insisting in her new book that Eichmann was mediocre, she is still insisting, despite the historical facts, that totalitarianism can do anything. As God can speak even through a beast, so the modern dictatorial state can use any kind of human being as its instrument: Nazism used the mediocrity Eichmann.[3] But no state can be as powerful as Miss Arendt thought "The Totalitarian State" to be; no state, whatever its form, can have the power over its own nationals that the Nazis—by what I think was an accident of history—exercised almost exclusively against the Jews of Europe. Modern states, whatever their form, cannot rely on no matter what kind of person for no matter what function. Certainly the Jewish intellectual elite of Europe could not have served the Nazis as did the infamous Jewish police recruited from the scum of the ghettos. But why does Miss Arendt think then that anyone else could have done Eichmann's job and done it just as well? In that contention I hear the assertion once again of her incorrect theory about the totalitarian state: It is divine or devilish; it can do anything. She claims that Eichmann was commonplace and mediocre; but by the power of the totalitarian state he was able to exterminate a whole people. Should the Jews have resisted? So Miss Arendt claims now, but in fact, according to her view of what happened, the Jews of Europe were so compliant that Eichmann, their executioner, was even denied the opportunity to be conscience stricken as he sent them off to die. Eichmann according to his story did not even know that the Jews objected to dying until Kastner pointed out to him that they did. So for Miss Arendt there was no imperfection in the working of the totalitarian machine. And since all moral and political criticisms of the totali-

3. People like to think Eichmann mediocre; I think they also like the idea of Miss Arendt, implied by her subtitle, that evil can be banal. Why do they? Perhaps they are flattered to believe that in the ordinary and dulling conduct of their lives they are at the very least doing something wrong. In any case, evil is not banal, but a "half-way house" between the banal and the good, as A. N. Whitehead pointed out. The world, he insisted again and again—I think he would have included Nazi-occupied Europe as belonging to it—"never takes a holiday from metaphysical first principles."

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tarian state are, as Miss Arendt claimed long ago, quite irrelevant, her only critique of it had to be of its victims, and could only be couched by her in aesthetic terms. Miss Arendt of course cannot today propose a recipe for living through the hell of Nazi Europe to these European Jews who are already dead; but she does suggest that the manner in which they died was not very beautiful. As for Eichmann's moral ugliness, this is not something we now have to be concerned with; in fact, Eichmann is aesthetically palatable, while his victims are aesthetically repulsive. In all this, I hear beneath the hate-paean to totalitarianism Miss Arendt's praise of her own theory about it, a theory which I believe is now invalidated.

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MOVIE CHRONICLE

BODY AND SOUL

Kurosawa has made the first great shaggy-man movie. *Yojimbo* (The Bodyguard) is a comedy-satire of force: the story of the bodyguard who kills the bodies he is hired to guard. Our Westerner, the freelance professional gunman, the fastest draw in the West, has become the unemployed samurai; the gun for hire has become the sword for hire. But when our Westerner came into town, although his own past was often shady, he picked the *right* side, the farmers against the gamblers and cattle thieves, the side of advancing law and order and decency and schools and churches. Toshiro Mifune, the samurai without a master, the professional killer looking for employment, walks into a town divided by two rival merchants quarreling over a gambling concession, each supporting a gang of killers. The hero is the Westerner all right, the stranger in town, the disinterested outsider with his special skills and the remnants of a code of behavior, but to whom can he give his allegiance? Nobody represents any principle, the scattered weak are simply weak.

The Westerner has walked into the gangster movie: both sides are treacherous and ruthless (trigger-happy, they would be called in American pictures). He hires out to each and systematically eliminates both. He is the agent of their destruction because they offend his sense of how things should be: he destroys them because they disgust him. This black Robin Hood with his bemused contempt is more treacherous than the gangsters; he can defend his code only by a masterly use of the doublecross, and he enjoys himself with an occasional spree of demolition ("Destruction's our delight"). The excruciating humor of his last line, as he surveys the carnage—"Now there'll be a little quiet in this town"—is that we've heard it so many times before, but not

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amidst total devastation. His clean-up has been so thorough and so outrageously bloody that it has achieved a hilarious kind of style.

We would expect violence carried to extremity to be sickening; Kurosawa, in a triumph of bravura technique, makes it explosively comic and exhilarating. By taking the soft romantic focus off the Westerner as played by Gary Cooper or Alan Ladd or John Wayne, Kurosawa has made him a comic hero—just because of what he does, which was always incredible. Without his nimbus, he is unbelievably, absurdly larger-than-life. In *Shane,* the rather ponderously "classic" version of the Western, good and evil were white and black. Shane was Galahad. The Western dog, who howled at his master's grave in *Shane,* who crossed the road to frame the action at the beginning and end of *The Ox-Bow Incident,* has a new dimension in *Yojimbo*—he appears with a human hand for a bone. This dog signals us that in this movie the conventions of the form are going to be turned inside out, we'll have to shift expectations, abandon sentiments: in this terrain dog eats man. And if we think that man, having lost his best friend, can still count on his mother, Kurosawa has another shock for us. A boy from one gang, held prisoner by the other, is released; he rushes to his mother, crying "Oka" (ma or mother). She responds by slapping him. Mother isn't sentimental: first things first, and what she cares about is that gambling concession. This Eastern Western isn't merely a confusion in the points of the compass; Kurosawa's control and his sense of film rhythm are so sure that each new dislocation of value produces both surprise and delight, so that when the hero tries to free an old man who has been trussed-up and suspended in air, and the old man protests that he's safer where he is, we giggle in agreement.

Other directors attempt to recreate the pastness of a story, to provide distance, perspective. For Kurosawa, the setting may be feudal or, as in this case, mid-nineteenth-century, but we react (as we are supposed to react) as modern men. His time is now, his action so immediate, sensuous, raging, that we are forced to disbelieve, to react with incredulity, to admire. (This is partly the result of using telephoto lenses that put us right into the fighting, into the confusion of bared teeth and gasps and howls.) He shakes spears in our faces. This is more alive than any living we know; this, all our senses tell us, is art, not life. Ironic detachment is our saving grace.

Of all art forms, movies are most in need of having their concepts of heroism undermined. The greatest action pictures have often been satirical: even before Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., mocked the American

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dreams, our two-reelers used the new technique of the screen to parody the vacuous heroics of stage melodrama. But in recent years John Ford, particularly, has turned the Western into an almost static pictorial genre, a devitalized, dehydrated form which is "enriched" with pastoral beauty and evocative nostalgia for a simple, heroic way of life. The clichés we retained from childhood pirate, buccaneer, gangster, and Western movies have been awarded the status of myths, and writers and directors have been making infatuated tributes to them. If, by now, we dread going to see a "great" Western, it's because "great" has come to mean slow and pictorially composed. We'll be lulled to sleep in the "affectionate," "pure," "authentic" scenery of the West, or, for a change, we'll be clobbered by messages in "mature" Westerns (the message will be that the myths we never believed in anyway were false). Kurosawa slashes the screen with action, and liberates us from the pretensions of our "serious" Westerns. After all those long, lean-hipped walks across the screen with Cooper or Fonda (the man who knows how to use a gun is, by movie convention, the man without an ass), we are restored to sanity by Mifune's heroic personal characteristic —a titanic shoulder twitch.

The Western has always been a rather hypocritical form. The hero represents a way of life that is becoming antiquated. The solitary defender of justice is the last of the line; the era of lawlessness is over, courts are coming in. But the climax is the demonstration that the old way is the only way that works—though we are told that it is the last triumph of violence. The Westerner, the loner, must take the law into his hands for one last time in order to wipe out the enemies of the new system of justice. *Yojimbo* employs an extraordinary number of the conventions of the form, but takes the hypocrisy for a ride. The samurai is a killer with a code of honor and all that, but no system of justice is supplanting him. He's the last of the line not because law and order will prevail, but because his sword for hire is already anachronistic. Guns are coming in. One of his enemies is a gun-slinger, who looks and acts a parody of American Method actors. That ridiculous little gun means the end of the warrior caste: killing is going to become so easy that it will be democratically available to all. In *Yojimbo* goodness triumphs satirically: the foil at the point of the sword is a huge joke. The samurai is not a man with a poker face, and he's not an executioner who hates his job. He's a man of passion who takes savage satisfaction in his special talents. Violence triumphs whoever wins, and our ideas of courage, chivalry, strength, and honor bite the dust along with the "bad" men. The dogs will have their human fodder.

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Yojimbo is not a film that needs much critical analysis; its boisterous power and good spirits are right there on the surface. Lechery, avarice, cowardice, coarseness, animality, are rendered by fire; they become joy in life, in even the lowest forms of human life. Life is so abundantly lived that the whimpering, maimed and cringing are so vivid they seem joyful; what in life might be pathetic, loathsome, offensive is made comic and beautiful. Kurosawa makes us accept even the most brutish of his creatures as more alive than the man who doesn't yield to temptation. There is so much displacement that I don't think we have time or inclination to ask why we are enjoying it; we respond kinesthetically. I say "we" because it seems hard to believe that others don't share this response. Still, I should remember Bosley Crowther with his ". . . the dramatic penetration is not deep, and the plot complications are many and hard to follow in Japanese." And Dwight Macdonald, who writes, "It is a dark, neurotic, claustrophobic film . . ." and, "The Japanese have long been noted for their clever mimicry of the West. *Yojimbo* is the cinematic equivalent of their ten-cent ball-point pens and their ninety-eight-cent mini-cameras. But one expects more of Kurosawa."

More? Movies are, happily, a popular medium (which makes it difficult to understand why Dwight Macdonald with his dedication to high art sacrifices his time to them), but does that mean that people must look to them for confirmation of their soggiest humanitarian sentiments? The prissy liberals who wouldn't give a man with the D.T.'s a quarter for a shot ("He'll waste it on drink") are just the ones who love the message they take out of *Ikiru*, which is often called Kurosawa's masterpiece—that the meaning of life is in doing a bit of goody good good for others. I have talked to a number of these people about why they hated *The Manchurian Candidate* and I swear not one of them can remember that when the liberal senator is killed, milk pours out. *Yojimbo* seems so simple, so marvelously obvious, but those who are sentimental (like Macdonald) don't get it: they think it's a mistake, that it couldn't have been intended as a comedy. It's true that even Shakespeare didn't dare give his clowns hot blood to drink. But Kurosawa dares.

The Apu Trilogy has been widely acclaimed as a masterpiece, which indeed it is, though I would guess that in the years since its release fewer Americans have seen it than have seen *David and Lisa* in any *week* since its release. Fewer have seen Satyajit Ray's new film, *Devi*, than have seen *David and Lisa* in any *night* since its release.

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Ingmar Bergman, who was also a slow starter with American audiences, has definitely caught on; why not Ray?

Bergman is sensual and erotic; he provides "stark" beauty and exposed nerves and conventional dramatic conflicts and a theme that passes for contemporary—the coldness of intellectuals. Husbands fail their wives and drive them crazy because they don't understand them and all that. (Really, it's not people who don't understand us who drive us nuts—it's when those who shouldn't, *do*.) But I would guess that what gives his movies their immense appeal is their semi-intellectual, or, to be more rude, "metaphysical" content. His characters are like schoolboys who have just heard the startling new idea that "God is dead"; this sets them off on torments of deep thought. Even his best "dark" films, like *The Seventh Seal*, remind one of the nightmares of life and death and religion that one had as a child; the sense of mystery and the questions that no-one will answer suggest the way religious symbols function in childhood and in fear. Bergman's power over audiences is that he has not developed philosophically beyond the awesome questions: audiences trained in more rational philosophy still respond emotionally to Bergman's kind of mysticism, his searching for "the meaning of life," his fatalism, and the archaic ogres of childhood and religion. People come out of his movies with "something to think about" or, at least, to talk about.

Those who find Bergman profound and sophisticated (as if the artist who could move them deeply had to be a deep thinker) are very likely to find Satyajit Ray rather too simple. I think that Ray, like Kurosawa, is one of the great new film masters, and that his simplicity is a simplicity arrived at, achieved, a master's distillation from his experience; but it is—and this may be another reason why audiences prefer Bergman—the simplicity to which we must respond with *feeling*. It is not the simplicity of a film like *David and Lisa*—which is that of those who don't perceive complexities and have not yet begun to explore their medium. *David and Lisa* is simplicity at a pre-art level. People say that *David and Lisa* is a "heartfelt" experience, but they gobble it up so easily because it appeals to feelings they already had. It's a movie about mental disturbances that couldn't disturb anybody. Similarly, *Sundays and Cybèle*, also a phenomenal box-office success, is gobbled up as "artistic" (it's "artistic" the same way that *Harper's Bazaar* fiction is "beautifully literate"). Bosley Crowther says that *Sundays and Cybèle* is "what *Lolita* might conceivably have been had it been made by a poet and angled to be a rhapsodic song of innocence and not a smirking joke." Surely only a satirist like Nabokov could

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have invented this eminent critic whose praise gives the show away—"angled to be a rhapsodic song of innocence."

(One of the delights of life in San Francisco is observing the cultural chauvinism of New York from a safe distance. *Variety* informs us that improvement is expected in West Coast movie tastes now that the Western edition of *The New York Times* brings us Bosley Crowther. And Dwight Macdonald, who calls any place outside New York "the provinces," has a solution for the problems of American movies: they should be made closer to the intellectual life of the nation—in New York. But it's the Eastern banks, not the Western minds, that are destroying our movies.)

The concept of humanity is so strong in Ray's films that a man who functioned as a villain could only be a limitation of vision, a defect, an intrusion of melodrama into a work of art which seeks to illuminate experience and help us feel. There is, for example, a defect of this kind in De Sica's *Umberto D*: the landlady is unsympathetically caricatured so that we do not understand and respond to her as we do to the others in the film. I don't think Ray ever makes a mistake of this kind: his films are so far from the world of melodrama that such a mistake is almost unthinkable. We see his characters not in terms of good or bad, but as we see ourselves—in terms of failures and weaknesses and strength; and, above all, as part of a human continuum —fulfilling, altering, and finally accepting ourselves as part of this humanity, recognizing that no matter how much we want to burst the bounds of experience, there is only so much we can do. This larger view of human experience—the simplicity of De Sica at his best, of Renoir at his greatest, is almost miraculously present in every detail of Satyajit Ray's films. Ray's method is perhaps the most direct and least impaired by commercial stratagems in the whole history of film. He does not even invent dramatic devices, short cuts to feelings. He made no passes at the commercial market; he didn't even reach out toward Western conceptions of drama and construction, although as one of the founders of the Calcutta film society, he must have been familiar with these conceptions. He seems to have had, from the beginning, the intuitive knowledge that this was not what he wanted.

There is a common misconception that Ray is a "primitive" artist and although, initially, this probably worked to his advantage in this country (*Pather Panchali* was taken to be autobiographical, and "true" and important because it dealt with rural poverty), it now works to his disadvantage, because his later films are taken to be corrupted by exposure to "art," and thus less "true." *The Apu Trilogy* expresses

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India in transition, showing the development of the boy Apu's consciousness from the primitive, medieval village life of *Pather Panchali* through the modern city streets and schools of Benares to the University of Calcutta in *Aparajito*, and then, in *The World of Apu*, beyond self-consciousness to the destruction of his egotism, and the rebirth of feeling, the renewal of strength. But Ray himself is not a primitive artist any more than, say, Robert Flaherty was when he chronicled the life of the Eskimos in *Nanook of the North*.

In a review of *Aparajito*, Kingsley Amis, then *Esquire's* movie critic, thought that "Satyajit Ray, the director, seems to have set out with the idea of photographing without rearrangement the life of a poor Indian family, of reporting reality in as unshaped a form as possible." And his successor, Macdonald, who considered *The World of Apu* worthy of no more than one of his "short takes," wrote that in the final part of Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* trilogy, *The World of Apu* ". . . I felt that what was direct has now become self-conscious. *Pather* was about a family in a village, *Apu* is about a young writer in a city, a more complex theme and I'm not sure Ray is up to it."

Each of the films of *The Apu Trilogy* represents a change, I think a development, of style. Unfortunately, those who responded to the slow rhythm of *Pather Panchali* felt that this pace was somehow more true to India than the faster pace of the third film, *The World of Apu*. But Ray's rhythm is derived from his subject matter, and for the college students and artists of *The World of Apu*, the leisurely flow of the season on which *Pather Panchali* was based would be ludicrous. Even those who prefer *Pather Panchali* to his later work should recognize that an artist cannot retain his first beautiful awkward expressiveness and innocence, and that to attempt to do so would mean redoing consciously what had been beautiful because it was not completely conscious. Ray was a highly educated man at the beginning of his film career, and he was influenced by a wide variety of films, those of Renoir and De Sica in particular. (Sent by his employers to England for three months in 1950, he went to more than ninety films, and he has reported that the one that helped most to clarify his ideas was *The Bicycle Thief*.) Among his other influences are certainly Dovzhenko's *Earth* and Eisenstein, and probably Von Sternberg.

Although India's film industry is the second or third largest in the world, Ray is the *only* Indian director; he is, as yet, in a class by himself. Despite the financial conditions under which he works, despite official disapproval of his themes, despite popular indifference to his work, he is in a position that almost any film-maker anywhere in the

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world might envy. The Indian film industry is so *thoroughly* corrupt that Ray could start fresh, as if it did not exist. Consider the Americans, looking under stones for some tiny piece of subject matter they can call their own, and you can judge the wealth, the prodigious, fabulous heritage that an imaginative Indian can draw upon. Just because there has been almost nothing of value done in films in India, the whole country and its culture is his to explore and express to the limits of his ability; he is the first major artist to draw upon these vast and ancient reserves. The Hollywood director who re-makes biblical spectacles or Fannie Hurst stories for the third or sixth or ninth time is a poor man—no matter how big his budget—compared to the first film artist of India. American directors of talent can still try to beat the system, can still feel that maybe they can do something worth doing, and every once in a while someone almost does. In India, the poverty of the masses, and their desperate *need* for escapist films, cancels out illusions.

Ray began his film career with a masterpiece, and a trilogy at that; this makes it easy to shrug off his other films as very fine but not really up to the trilogy. It *is* true that the other films are smaller in scope. But, if there had been no trilogy, we would say of *Devi,* "This is the greatest Indian film ever made." And if there had been no trilogy and no Devi, I would say the same of his still later film, *Teenkenya.* (Ray has had so little box-office draw in the United States, that *The Music Room,* made between the second and third parts of the trilogy, has had only a few scattered showings, and *Teenkenya,* based on three Tagore stories, hasn't been released here. I saw two of the episodes of *Teenkenya* in Canada last year, and one of them, *The Postmaster,* is the most beautiful short-story film I've ever seen, East or West, bar none.)

Devi, based on a theme from Tagore, is here thanks to the personal intercession of Nehru, who removed the censors' export ban. According to official Indian policy, *Devi* is misleading in its view of Indian life. We can interpret this to mean that, even though the film is set in the nineteenth century, the government is not happy about the world getting the idea that there are or ever were superstitions in India. In the film, the young heroine is believed by her rich father-in-law to be an incarnation of the goddess Kali. I don't know why the Indian government was so concerned about this—anyone who has ever tried to tell children how, for example, saints function in Catholic doctrine may recognize that we have a few things to explain, too. Those who grow up surrounded by Christian symbols and dogmas are hardly in a position to point a finger of shame at Kali worship—particularly as it seems so closely

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related to prayers to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. As the film makes clear, Kali is generally called "Ma."

The film has so many Freudian undertones that I was not surprised when the film-maker sitting next to me in the empty theatre muttered, "Think what Buñuel would do with this." I'm grateful that it's Ray, not Buñuel, and that the undertones stay where they belong—down under. Buñuel would have made it explicit. Ray never tells us that this is the old man's way of taking his son's bride away from him; he doesn't tell us that this is the old man's way of punishing his Westernized, Christianized son; he never says that religion is the last outpost of the old man's sensuality, his return to childhood and "ma" love. But we experience all this, just as we experience the easy drift of the lovely silly young girl into the auto-intoxication, the narcissism of believing that she *is* a goddess. She is certainly beautiful enough. In one sense the film is about what Christians might call the sin of pride: the girl who finds it not too difficult to believe that she is a goddess, fails to cure the nephew she adores; when the child dies, she goes mad. But that is a Christian oversimplification: what we see is the girl's readiness to believe, her liquid acquiescence; not so much *pride* as a desire to please—the culmination, we suspect, of what the culture expects of a high-born girl. And, surrounded by so much luxury, what is there for the girl to do but try to please? The whole indolent life is centered on pleasure.

Ray creates an atmosphere that intoxicates us as well; the household is so rich and the rich people so over-ripe. The handsome, soft-eyed men in their silks and brocades are unspeakably fleshly; the half-naked beggars on the steps outside are clothed in their skins, but the rich are eroticized by their garments. And perhaps because of the camera work, which seems to derive from some of the best traditions of the silent screen and the Thirties, perhaps because of the Indian faces themselves, the eyes have depths—and a disturbing look of helplessness —that we are unused to. It's almost as if these people were isolated from us and from each other by their eyes. It is not just that they seem exotic to us, but that each is a stranger to the others. Their eyes link them to the painted eyes of the Hindu idols, and, in the film, it is this religion which separates them. They are lost behind their eyes.

Sharmila Tagore, who played the bride of Apu, and who plays the goddess, is exquisite, perfect (a word I don't use casually) in both these roles. And the men are wonderfully selected—so that they manage to suggest both the handsomeness of almost mythological figures and the rotting weakness of their way of life. Ray has been developing his

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own stock company, and anyone who mistook the principal players in the trilogy for people just acting out their own lives for the camera, may be startled now to see them in a nineteenth-century mansion. In the early parts of the trilogy, Ray was able to convince many people that he had simply turned his cameras on life; he performs the same miracle of art on this decadent, vanished period. The setting of *Devi* seems to have been caught by the camera just before it decays. Here, as in the trilogy, Ray gives us his vision—which is often ironic—of the disintegration of old ways of life and the development of new.

It is a commentary on the values of *our* society that those who saw truth and greatness in *The Apu Trilogy*, particularly in the opening film with its emphasis on the mother's struggle to feed the family, are not drawn to a film in which Ray shows the landowning class and its collapse of beliefs. It is part of *our* heritage from the Thirties that the poor still seem "real" and the rich "trivial." *Devi* should, however, please even Marxists if they would go to see it; it is the most convincing study of upper-class decadence I have ever seen. But it is Ray's feeling for the beauty within this decadent way of life that makes it convincing. Eisenstein cartooned the upper classes and made them hateful; they became puppets in the show he was staging. Ray, by giving them the respect and love that he gives the poor and struggling, helps us to understand their demoralization. The rich, deluded father-in-law of *Devi* is as human in his dreamy sensuality as Apu's own poet father. Neither can sustain his way of life or his beliefs against the new pressures; and neither can adapt.

Like Renoir and De Sica, Ray sees that life itself is good no matter how bad it is. It is difficult to discuss art which is an affirmation of life, without fear of becoming maudlin. But is there any other kind of art, on screen or elsewhere? "In cinema," Ray says, "we must select everything for the camera according to the richness of its power to reveal." Aesthetics and morality are more closely interrelated than many wish to acknowledge: they are inseparable. And that is why when we see a movie like Jules Dassin's *Phaedra* or *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* we feel disgust. And we understand Kurosawa's hero, with his passion for destruction.

Pauline Kael

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George Lichtheim

POWER AND IDEOLOGY

In the spring of 1961 Dr. Arnold Toynbee spent some time at the University of Pennsylvania under the auspices of the Department of History. The event is likely one day to find its place in the revised Index of Dr. Toynbee's *Study of History,* which lists other important occasions in the life of the author (Cf. Toynbee, Arnold Joseph: countries and places visited by). I make this confident prediction because Dr. Toynbee used the opportunity of his stay on the campus to deliver three public lectures, in which among other things he acquainted his hearers with the fact that they were now the owners and managers of a world empire in the succession of Rome.[1] At the same time that he made this disclosure, he voiced some uncomfortable doubts about the management of the estate, and even hinted that America might be losing the current popularity contest in the uncommitted world. The explanation he gave of this calamitous possibility must have made his hearers sit up, for it was quite out of tune with the liberal rhetoric to which academic audiences are accustomed. After some polite talk about 1776 and all that, this is what he had to say:

> Today America is no longer the inspirer and leader of the World Revolution, and I have an impression that she is embarrassed and annoyed when she is reminded that this was her original mission. . . America is today the leader of a world-wide anti-revolutionary movement in defense of vested interests. She now stands for what Rome stood for. Rome consistently supported the rich against the poor in all foreign communities that fell under her sway; and since the poor, so far, have always and everywhere been far more numerous than the rich,

1. *America and the World Revolution.* By Arnold J. Toynbee. Oxford University Press, $1.25.

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> Rome's policy made for inequality, for injustice, and for the least happiness of the greatest number. America's decision to adopt Rome's role has been deliberate, if I have gauged it right . . . yet, in the spirit that animates this recent American movement in reverse, I miss the enthusiasm and the confidence that made the old revolutionary America irresistible. . . Playing Metternich is not a happy role . . . who . . . would have guessed that America, of all countries, would one day cast herself for Metternich's dreary part? (pp. 16-17)

Now such remarks are clearly open to criticism. It can be argued that Dr. Toynbee spoke before the New Frontier had unfolded its challenging vistas. It can also be objected that strictures of this kind come with diminished effect from the high priest of High Toryism. All things considered, American imperialism, or what passes for such, has hitherto been somewhat more progressive, or at any rate less unprogressive, than British imperialism. Still, the charge of social conservatism must, one imagines, have rankled with Dr. Toynbee's hearers because it is so obviously true. It is not, of course, very original to say that America has for some time been launched on the imperial path. In substance it only repeats what Santayana said, in his usual polite manner, a number of years ago. But then Dr. Toynbee is seldom original: his great gift is for wrapping up commonplaces in startling language. Moreover, when he descends from his usual lofty heights to ordinary socio-economic reality, he tends to become less than infallible. His explanation of American conservatism is that all, or most, Americans are now well-off, and thus lack instinctive sympathy with poorer people. This kind of amiable nonsense is to be expected from elderly historians unacquainted with economics. There is no need to pursue Dr. Toynbee's well-meant recommendations for making America popular in backward countries: more missionaries, less reliance on the local PX, etc. The Peace Corps can be trusted to attend to these matters. Indeed it seems to have been specially designed to cope with just the kind of problems that can be solved with a little personal goodwill.

If Dr. Toynbee had taken his own assessment more seriously, he would not have devoted so much space to the minor misdemeanors of Americans abroad. Instead he would have expanded his warning of what may happen if America's allies become resentful of their present status:

> If it was reasonable . . . for Great Britain's thirteen colonies to insist on 'no taxation without representation,' 'no annihilation without representation' seems an even more reasonable

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> demand for America's allies to present to America today. To be taxed without being given a say was provocative, but to be annihilated without being given a say would be intolerable. (p. 33)

This is a bigger issue than rudeness to natives, and Dr. Toynbee feels impelled to recall "the history of Rome's constitutional relations with her Italian allies," which led to a civil war being fought before the "system of alliances between a paramount power and its satellites" was placed upon a more acceptable basis. "As you will see," he says with disarming candor, "I am suggesting that America has acquired an empire and that, though this Empire is today still in an early stage of its development, it has been evolving, in some respects, along the same lines as at least one of the notorious empires of the past." This cautious formulation strikes the proper balance between Dr. Toynbee's basic commitment to Spengler's fatalism, and his occasional lapses into religious idealism: the future is not *quite* determined. The degree of indeterminacy (as we have learned by now) depends upon men's ability to raise themselves above the material level. "The true end of Man is *not* to possess the maximum amount of consumer goods per head." "See how Christian monks or Buddhist monks live. This will give you a fair measure of what the genuine necessities of life truly amount to" (pp. 69-9). If we restrict our "bogus wants," we can aid the poorer countries, regain their esteem, and perhaps save our souls in the bargain.

II

It is fair to say, then, that Dr. Toynbee opened on a note of prophecy and concluded with a sermon. Something of its spirit is echoed in a tract for the times recently published by a distinguished representative of what for want of a better term must be called the American Establishment: Mr. Louis Halle.[2] A retired diplomat and a scholar, Mr. Halle embodies a well-defined tradition which the British used to think they had a monopoly of: that of the cultivated gentleman who in his leisure hours reflects upon the lessons of history and the meaning of events. Mr. Halle does not appear to be a philosopher by training, but neither was Arthur Balfour, whose writings —composed before he became Prime Minister—are still listed in reference books, though not perhaps very closely studied these days.

2. *Men and Nations.* By Louis J. Halle. Princeton University Press. $4.75.

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Like Balfour, Mr. Halle is a gentleman-scholar with a skeptical turn of mind; also like Balfour, he is an instinctive conservative. Rousseau figures in his list of heretics immediately before Marx; Jacobinism appears as a peril scarcely inferior to Communism. Indeed the two are linked (as indeed they were, insofar as the Russian Revolution duplicated the French, though this scarcely exhausts the subject of Marxism). There are moments when one suspects that Dr. Toynbee may have had Mr. Halle in mind when he made his malicious remark about American conservatives having become pupils of Metternich.

However, there is no need to get annoyed with him. As conservatives go these days, he is a distinctly superior specimen: austere, learned, and almost excessively civilized. His refinement in fact worries me a little. If Dr. Toynbee is right, America now has an Empire, and every Empire must have an Establishment. Well and good: there is much to be said for Establishments. They rarely produce anything new and striking, but they are supremely competent when it comes to upholding standards, transmitting civilized values, and in general playing the part of culture-preservers. I am all for having a genuine conservative Establishment (if only because it makes an ideal target for radicals), but I wonder if Mr. Halle may not have come on the scene a bit too early. There is something about his tone—urbane, patrician, reserved, a trifle disconsolate even—that does not quite fit the circumstances. He would probably not resent being described as a spiritual descendant of Henry Adams. Now Adams could afford to be relatively complacent about the civilization of his time. In the first place he was an Adams; in the second place the world he lived in could be interpreted, more or less, in terms of his philosophy. I am not so sure about Mr. Halle's relationship to *his* world. I suspect he is not merely out of tune with the present age—in which respect he must have the sympathy of every civilized person—but at a loss to account for its peculiar behavior. I was going to say that his style has an Augustan quality, but on reflection his manner strikes me as late-Roman. Now this is serious. If Toynbee is right, and if we are witnessing the birth-pangs of the American Empire, there is something wrong with Mr. Halle's attitude. I confess I find his essay a bit disconcerting: it conveys the image of a cultivated gentleman, with private means and Stoic sympathies, whiling away the time under Caracalla, rather than an active participant in the Augustan enterprise. In short, I cannot help feeling that Mr. Halle has somehow strayed into the wrong epoch.

The thing that particularly disturbs me about him—always as-

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suming that he ought to be doing a bit of spiritual empire-building—is his defeatism about the modern world. After all, he is not the only traditionalist to remember better days and a stabler world. There is De Gaulle: my favorite conservative statesman, I have to admit. If we *must* have conservatism, let it be Gaullist, that is, intelligent, courageous, and frankly authoritarian. Then there was Churchill—a Liberal Imperialist (in British terminology) rather than a Tory, but distinctly a Burkean, and so a representative of the school Mr. Halle admires. Now the odd thing about Churchill and De Gaulle is that for all their basic conservatism they have been remarkably successful in adapting themselves to their age. I fancy this has been partly due to their sense of the material possibilities opened up for their respective nations by science and technology. They are, in this sense, modern. Moreover, they are not distressed by the notion that democracy—in the full and original sense—is not workable: they never thought it was. This is the European cynicism that Americans get so angry with when they encounter it for the first time. Democracy is an American faith. Few Europeans have ever quite shared it, and even those who do generally concede that the system works best at the municipal level. Parliament is largely a sham which hides the reality of Cabinet government. The British have known this for a long time, just as they have long known that (in a phrase familiar to classicists) a democracy cannot govern an empire. It is one thing or the other: if you take your democracy seriously, you must give up your possessions. Both the British and the French have made this discovery recently, precisely during the years when the Americans began to travel in the opposite direction.

Is this why Mr. Halle sounds so melancholy, or is he unaware that he and his fellow-thinkers are currently engaged on the important, and indeed overdue, task of providing the new American Establishment with an ideology suited to its current role in the world? To me he sounds like Marc Aurel when he ought to be sounding like Cicero. The burden of empire rests wearily upon his shoulders. Worse still, he conceives it his duty to impress upon his readers the importance of not taking the material world too seriously. His solution of the moral problem inherent in politics is a Platonist one. There are two realms: that of the senses, in which we unfortunately have to live, and that of spiritual ideas. Only the second is truly real. The material order is an inferior copy of the spiritual, or ideal, order. This can be proved by experience, even by experiment. "In human creation the idea always comes first." Religious conclusions naturally follow: "The Platonic

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view has its theological expression in the untranslatable first five verses of the Gospel according to John, in what is called the doctrine of the *Logos*: the idea came first . . . Christianity, as it was conceived by its founder, Paul, was rooted in this view." In the sublunary world, though, there are conflicting ideas: e.g., "Nietzsche's idea of man does not agree with that of St. Francis, nor does Karl Marx's with that of St. Paul. . . . This is the human dilemma. . . . We live in two worlds, a primary world of perfect ideas and an imperfect world which imitates it." The imperfect world is that of ordinary human history, in which men are unable to agree upon ultimate aims. "The dual philosophy holds that, implicit in the order of nature from the beginning, there has been an idea of man that represents what he is intended to be. We ought to model ourselves upon it, as Cicero and others have affirmed. But we are able to apprehend it uncertainly at best and cannot agree on it. In our ignorance and disagreement, then, some of us follow Nietzsche and some St. Francis, some Kipling and some Gandhi, some Tolstoy and some Hitler. Without knowledge of the ultimate, we are constrained to make do among conflicting opinions as best we can" (pp. 7-14).

Now this won't do at all. I am not here concerned with the substance of Mr. Halle's position. It has a respectable ancestry, and doubtless it can be made plausible to people who are temperamentally disposed to such beliefs. But it is useless as an imperial creed, at any rate in the present stage, when the Empire still has to be constructed, and moreover must contend with an antagonist who believes firmly in the objective and universal import of *his* ideology. Mr. Halle must think again; or if he won't, someone else must. It is all very well for Professor Toynbee to be skeptical about moral values: his own Empire (whose decline he has been celebrating in so many learned volumes) has virtually surrendered the ghost, and no longer needs a Public Philosophy to sustain it. But if America is to step into Britannia's shoes, its ruling elite will have to evolve a proper awareness of its role, and I don't see how Mr. Halle's blend of stoicism and skepticism can be much use to it. The less so since he is an individualist and inclined to doubt the "real" existence of entities such as nations. "The existence of the individual is absolute and unmistakable. . . A community, on the other hand, is a matter of degree" (p. 18). "Was Socrates a European, a Greek, or an Athenian? . . . What is a Jew? . . . What distinguishes German Jews from other Germans, perhaps, is simply an idea of Jewishness" (p. 28). Mr. Halle has the courage of his convictions.

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III

Philosophers of empire are made of sterner stuff. This is not to say that they must necessarily be reactionary or aggressive. There have been civilized exponents of the creed, including liberals and socialists as well as moderate conservatives. The failure to recognize this is among the numerous faults of the bulky textbook assembled by Professor Snyder.[3] Judging from his selection and the preface, he is one of those sound, forward-looking citizens for whom there are only two kinds of imperialism: reactionary (mainly British) and revolutionary (Russian). The United States, it appears, had a brief attack of the malady around 1900, but recovered with amazing rapidity, and has been healthy and virtuous ever since. This begs all the questions, notably the question how the British managed to combine overseas expansion with economic liberalism. Of course if one defines "imperialism" to mean the kind of thing Britain practiced in India, France in Algeria, and Russia in Central Asia, everything becomes simple. One can then note with satisfaction William Jennings Bryan's rebuke to McKinley (p. 400), and conclude that the American people would have nothing to do with the doctrine expounded by Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt. And, needless to say, one can devote a sizable part of one's compilation to an indictment of the enemy, on the twofold ground that (a) Lenin's theory of imperialism is defective, and (b) Lenin's successors have become imperialists themselves. In which case we are back with the familiar equation: imperialism = domination over other people. But no one ever questioned that. The problem that modern writers have been struggling with, and which Professor Snyder's anthology systematically obscures, is how and why imperialism survived into the modern age, when according to all the tenets of free-trade logic it should have withered away.

Now for one thing Professor Snyder does not play fair with his readers. He quotes out of context, selects what suits him, and overlooks (I had almost employed a less restrained term) inconvenient items. Thus by way of illustrating the thesis that European imperialism was closely tied to reaction, he cites the German Conservative party's election manifesto of 1906 (p. 89), but says nothing about the colonialist propaganda of the German Liberals (the so-called Progressives no less than the National-Liberals) who at that time had formed an alliance with the Conservatives. Elsewhere, Cecil Rhodes

3. *The Imperialism Reader: Documents and Readings on Modern Expansionism.* Edited by Louis L. Snyder. Van Nostrand Company. $8.50.

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and Kipling duly appear as protagonists of British overseas expansion, while the far more influential Liberal Imperialists (and their Fabian allies) are ignored. Socialist pacifism before 1914 is illustrated by a bit of sentimental rhetoric culled from one of Jaurès' speeches on Morocco; nothing is said about Edouard Bernstein's public support for German colonial expansion and the acquisition of naval bases in China. Marxism is represented by Lenin, although his pamphlet on imperialism merely vulgarized the thought of more serious writers. Schumpeter's well-known essay of 1919 is quoted in such a fashion as to give the totally misleading impression that he denied the economic roots of modern imperialism; whereas in fact his account of the subject differs from the Austro-Marxist theory only in unimportant details. This particular bit of "editing" really calls for something stronger than mere critical reproof; scholars are free to indulge their political hobby-horses, but they are not supposed to tamper with the evidence.

But the chief fault of this tedious compilation is its mindlessness. A large-scale exercise in Cold War propaganda, elaborately dressed up as scholarship, might still have contained a few illuminating ideas. There are none, only a large and badly organized collection of snippets, and a parade of trivialities by the editor. Students curious to know what imperialism meant in its heyday before the First World War will do better to consult the case for the prosecution and for the defense in two recent books: Bernard Semmel's *Imperialism and Social Reform* and A. P. Thornton's *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies;* the first a quasi-Marxist analysis of the forces underlying British policy, the second an eloquent apology of the imperial creed by one of its last defenders. For imperialism was more than a political maneuver. It was a movement, an ideology, almost a way of life. Its exponents included liberal aristocrats, Fabian socialists, and neo-Hegelian philosphers, as well as militarists and racists. Above all, it was an international phenomenon. Its loudest and most eloquent protagonists were Anglo-American liberals. Mr. Halle, who, unlike Professor Snyder, is not disposed to conceal this awkward fact, quotes a characteristic utterance by the well-known liberal journalist William Allen White: "It is the Anglo-Saxon's manifest destiny to go forth as a world conqueror. He will take possession of the islands of the sea. . . . This is what fate holds for the chosen people. It is so written. . . . It is to be" (*Op. cit.*, p. 177). Of course this was at the height of the mania around 1900. The point is that, with a few exceptions, the mood had taken possession of people who regarded themselves as advanced and progressive. The split within the Liberal party in England (which

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finally wrecked it) is the best proof. Professor Snyder of course has no notion that there was such a thing as liberal imperialism. For him all imperialists are either reactionaries or Communists. He is in for a surprise.

For obvious reasons, pre-1914 England was the country where the imperialist movement attained its fullest intellectual expression. England had the world's greatest empire, and it also had the world's most successful oligarchy. German imperialism was reactionary and racist. French imperialism was bourgeois and positivist. British imperialism was neither. Its exponents—whether they belonged to the Conservative or the Liberal Party—already possessed the ruling-class ethos which is the precondition of a fully developed imperial mystique. They represented a country governed on liberal lines by an oligarchy drawn in part from the thirty thousand landowners who possessed ninety percent of Britain's soil. Most Americans have never seen a liberal oligarchy in action, and cannot imagine what it is like. They associate landowners with reaction. The smaller gentry were indeed Tories, but many of the great landed families were Whigs, and they dominated the Liberal Party down to the 1880's. What is more, they transmitted the ruling-class ethos to the wealthy patricians and solid professional men—Asquith, Haldane, Grey, and the rest—who succeeded them. The genuinely democratic, pacifist, anti-imperialist wing of the Liberal Party was never in control: its lower-middle-class, nonconformist, teetotaling, provincial earnestness made it appear slightly ridiculous in the eyes of the ruling elite. These pacifist Liberals were the "Radicals" (in British parlance), and J. A. Hobson was their prophet. His well-known work entitled *Imperialism* appeared in 1902, and all the socialists of the period, including Lenin, cribbed from it. But he never converted his own party, and Radicalism as a movement was a total failure. The only real leader it ever produced, Lloyd George, ran out on his followers in 1914 and—with the Liberal Imperialist Winston Churchill—became one of the two great wartime Prime Ministers Britain has had in this century.

1914-18 was a turning-point. It was the triumph of the imperialist movement, but also its Nemesis. As the war dragged on, the democratic and pacifist tide gained in strength, and by 1919 imperialism was on the defensive all over the Western world, and more particularly in Britain, where official Liberalism had split and thousands of pacifist Radicals streamed into the Labor Party. For the real heyday of the movement one must go back to the pre-war era, when popular feeling and imperialism marched hand in hand. Its first great electoral

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triumphs occurred in the 1880's, and then for a while indeed it was the Conservatives who profited most from it. They were traditionally the party of military rule, in India and elsewhere, and the "service classes" who read Kipling had their own vision of society. By then these strata of the middle class most closely connected with the military services and the colonial administration had assimilated the traditional ruling-class outlook and employed it as a justification for lording it over subject populations. Emotionally and intellectually, their creed envisioned an "ordered" hierarchical society, infused with feudal sentiments of mutual respect and obligation, though at the same time the new ruling elite would be self-made, not hereditary. It would govern the "lesser breeds" for their own benefit, and uphold the "law" taught in the great public schools. This is the ethos of Kipling, and by now everyone knows what to think of it. But what of Joseph Conrad?

> The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . .
>
> (*Heart of Darkness*)

Hardly an anti-imperialist utterance. Conrad in fact voiced the stoical sentiment in which middle-class liberalism adapted itself to the reality of Empire. It was there, and one had to make the best of it. The "idea" was what counted. There were others whose applause was more full-blooded. Lord Rosebery, a Liberal aristocrat and in 1894 Gladstone's successor as Prime Minister, had no doubt at all that the Empire was a great thing:

> How marvellous it all is! Built not by saints and angels, but the work of men's hands; cemented with men's honest blood and with a world of tears, welded by the best brains of the centuries past; not without the taint and reproach incidental to all human work, but constructed on the whole with pure and splendid purpose. Human and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine. (Cited by G. Bennett, *The Concept of Empire*, pp. 326-7.)

Rosebery, unlike Balfour, was no philosopher, and one hardly knows where he acquired these sentiments, but he could have obtained

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them during his stay in Oxford, then and for years a center of neo-Hegelianism. Balliol College, the "academy" of the Hegelians—Green, Bradley, Bosanquet and the rest—was also a nursery of statesmen and publicists: Curzon, later Viceroy of India; Milner, the great South African Proconsul and Lloyd George's colleague in the War Cabinet of 1916-18; Asquith, Liberal Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916; Edward Grey; and Churchill's friend L. S. Amery. The link between Hegelian idealism and the imperialist movement was furnished by Hegel's theory of the State, which is anti-liberal and in essence goes back to Burke. Its centerpiece is the notion that the institutions of society are the concrete embodiment of moral values which have a higher claim upon men's allegiance than the visionary utterances of the individual conscience. Morality consists in the discharge of man's duties in the narrow circle in which he actually lives—his family, his locality, his nation—not in running after cosmopolitan chimeras. Since Hegel had derived this conservative philosophy from Burke, it is hardly surprising that Hegelianism came to dominate Oxford, or that philosophers like Bosanquet and Bradley became the teachers of statesmen and administrators who then went out to govern an empire. But to suppose that all these men were Tories is to misunderstand the situation. The Hegelian philosopher T. H. Green was a faithful Liberal and an advocate of "three acres and a cow" radicalism, the program adopted by Joseph Chamberlain in 1885 when he was still a Radical and not yet the prophet of Empire. Bosanquet was another Liberal, and Arnold Toynbee, Sr., the friend of Milner, was even suspected of socialism!

Needless to say, Hegelian idealism was too esoteric to serve the purpose of the new imperialist creed in any but the most exalted circles. The middle class made do with popularized Darwinian notions and racial theories which preached the innate superiority of the Anglo-Saxons. But here again one must be careful: the Darwinians included Karl Pearson, and Pearson was a socialist who had come to the conclusion that Herbert Spencer and the other individualists were all wrong. Society was not just an assemblage of individuals; the "survival of the fittest" was a *collective* affair. A nation was "an organized whole . . . kept up to a high pitch of external efficiency by contest, chiefly by way of war with inferior races, and with equal races by the struggle for trade routes and for the sources of raw material and of food supply" (Pearson, *National Life,* p. 46). Its problems consequently had to be viewed in social terms. In order to be organized properly for the struggle against its neighbors, the nation had to be a "homogen-

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ous whole"; and, equally important, "we must not have class differences and wealth differences so great within the community that we lose the sense of common interest." This was National Socialism *avant la lettre;* Pearson had studied in Bismarckian Germany and knew what he was talking about.

IV

Against this stream of neo-Hegelian, neo-conservative, pseudo-liberal, racist, Darwinist, and national-socialist literature, which by 1900 had become a veritable torrent, the surviving representatives of orthodox liberalism conducted a hopeless defensive battle. Inevitably they were compelled, in the interest of self-preservation, to shift their center of gravity leftward, and eventually many of them broke with middle-class liberalism altogether and joined the Labor party. The interval was filled by Radicalism: the form in which Gladstonian (or Cobdenite) Liberalism finally gave up the ghost. Why was Radicalism a failure? For an answer one need go no further than to its theoretical bible. Hobson's work was the credo of a manufacturing provincial middle class whose grandfathers in the 1850's had followed Cobden in his fruitless campaign against the Crimean War. (It is worth remembering that when it came to foreign policy, Cobden's failure was no less total than that of his descendants.) Hobson asserted that imperialism benefited neither the colonies nor the metropolis; the only thing that could benefit them was free trade. But in 1902 free trade was already becoming an unpopular doctrine, and moreover the camp of its defenders included the Liberal Imperialists, who agreed with the Tories on the need to prepare for the coming showdown with Germany. It also included the leading Fabians (notably Sidney and Beatrice Webb) who maintained the closest contact with the Liberal Imperialist group and furnished it with a good deal of intellectual ammunition. For the Webbs, with their faith in planning and a stronger State, Cobdenism was the enemy, and middle-class pacifist Radicalism a ghost from the Victorian past. In this attitude they were joined by the future Liberal War Minister, Haldane, and by the Tory Proconsul of Empire, Milner, who had started his career as a sympathetic student of socialism. The London School of Economics was the great creation of the Webbs, and the man they chose to direct it was the rabid imperialist W. A. S. Hewins. Another of their circle—informally known as "the Coefficients Club"—was H. J. Mackinder, later to become the founder of "geopolitics," a doctrine subsequently propagated with great success in Germany by Karl Haushofer, from whom Hitler acquired what little

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he knew about such matters. Mackinder, needless to say, was a prominent Liberal: he succeeded Hewins as Director of the London School of Economics.

What did the Liberal Imperialists and their Fabian allies believe? In 1911 H. G. Wells drew a malicious portrait of them in his *New Machiavelli,* where the group appears as the "Pentagram Circle." He makes the point that they thought war with Germany was inevitable, as indeed they did. There was a sub-division between Conservative protectionists and Liberal free-traders, but as for defending the Empire against all comers they were in agreement (except for Bertrand Russell, who resigned from the club after a violent argument with Sir Edward Grey, later Liberal Foreign Secretary, on the issue of military alliances against Germany). Next, they had little use for democracy. On this most of them accepted Sidney Webb's view that it was a sham. Lastly, they thought that to become competitive, Britain would have to adopt certain German institutions: notably social insurance for the working class, conscription for the army, and the German educational system, which Haldane thought was superior to the British and should be treated as a model. In order to attain these ends they were prepared to spend more money than financial orthodoxy in those pre-1914 days thought reasonable. Wells, who in 1911 stressed that the "Pentagram" was "very keen on military organization," also noted that "they were disposed to spend money much more generously on education and research of all sorts than our formless host of Liberals seemed likely to do." The Webbs, who stood at the center of this circle (which *inter alia* included a Morgan partner and various Conservative journalists and politicians, some of them future Cabinet Ministers), supplied the intellectual rationale for much of this agitation. Their private thoughts ran to confident forecasts that the coming war with Germany would necessitate a planned economy, hence Fabian direction and a measure of socialization: in which, however, they were largely disappointed so far as the *first* of the two German wars was concerned.

Bertrand Russell in his reminiscences (1956) has confirmed the essential accuracy of Wells's account, with special reference to the group's philosophical acceptance of the coming military showdown. "All the members except Wells and myself were imperialists and looked forward without too much apprehension to a war with Germany" (*Portraits from Memory,* p. 77). On this issue Wells later joined the majority and became a notable exponent of the Wilsonian "war to end war" doctrine. This is relevant for an understanding of the Liberal

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Imperialist ideology which was so unlike the German variety. The latter never acquired a universalist character, but remained primitive, racist, and tied to its *völkisch* origins, hence repellent to other people (with the exception of the Japanese, who were even more committed to pre-modern myths). It is this which enables contemporary writers to treat imperialism as an essentially retrograde phenomenon, which it was not. Of course there were Liberals who resisted the pull, just as there were sections of the business class—notably among the financial community—who could see no sense in imperialism and clung to the hope that peace might be preserved. But they were conducting a rear-guard action, and for this it is not enough to blame the Germans. The pure logic of *laissez-faire* pointed towards pacifism and free trade, but *laissez-faire* made a diminishing appeal even in its British homeland.

In 1919 Mackinder—by now famous as the author of the strategic "Heartland" doctrine, which both the Germans and the Russians later tried to put into practice—published a volume entitled *Democratic Ideals and Reality* in which he summed up the quarrel between protectionists and free traders, pronounced it unimportant, and went on to stress that the imperialists of both schools had been essentially "organizers" and patriots, whereas their opponents, the Cobdenite Liberals, were "idealists" and "internationalists," "in futile revolt against all organization." The doctrine of the "organizer" views men as "existing for the State," while the democrat is "thinking of the rights of man." This does not mean, though, that "the organizer" (a generation later James Burnham rediscovered him and called him "the manager") neglects the welfare of men. "On the contrary, he regards . . . society as so much man-power to be maintained in efficient condition." The rule of "the organizer" is "the Nemesis of democratic idealism," for democracy and efficiency are incompatible. This was the doctrine Mackinder had been taught by the Webbs, and which years later they were pleased to find embodied in Stalin's Russia. Mackinder also believed that democracy was incompatible with imperialism, though "even democracies are compelled to annex empires." (*Britain and the British Seas,* p. 342.) Were the British then doomed to lose their freedom? In 1902, while teaching geography at Oxford, he had suggested that British democracy and imperialism could coexist because of "the intervening ocean." In 1924 he still thought that "the separation of the tropical Empire from the European island" had the advantage that "imperial rule in the dependencies has not corrupted freedom at home," while on the other hand "those who exercise that rule, go out . . . with the spirit of justice and trusteeship ever renewed from their free

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homes and schools." (*The World War and After,* p. 266.) Sir Halford Mackinder wrote these lines after having briefly served as British High Commissioner for South Russia in the civil-war year 1919: an experiment in governing part of the East European "Heartland" he had described in his geo-political essays fifteen years earlier. He was not to know that two decades later another geo-politician would come a cropper in Southern Russia; or that his own former employers, the Webbs, would hail the Russian victory at Stalingrad as a world-historical turning-point, and a confirmation (naturally) of their own faith in rational organization. Such are a few among the avatars of a creed whose impact is not yet exhausted.

CORRECTION: This issue which is listed on the Table of Contents as No. 3, should be Volume XXX, No. 2.

IN COMING ISSUES OF PR

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Frank Kermode on The Modern Tradition

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AND TWO SPECIAL ISSUES:

New European Writing edited by Mary McCarthy

The Negro in America

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BOOKS

JAMES BALDWIN: VOICE OF A REVOLUTION

THE FIRE NEXT TIME. By James Baldwin. Dial. $3.50.

It is on the whole encouraging that James Baldwin should have become the voice of American Negroes, because he is also the voice of an American consciousness (conscience) which is not Negro. The word "home" occurs frequently in his writings, sometimes bitterly, sometimes quite ordinarily: and by it he means America, in spite of his being acutely aware that the white men of his country have never shared their home with the Negroes. James Baldwin is an American writer, regarded and criticized as such, one of the outstanding living writers in the English language. His very faults as a writer and a person—given the fact of his immense distinction as both—strengthen his position, because he can be criticized and argued with as a man who is neither black nor white, but who uses, and exists, within the English language. As a writer, he has no color, but only mind and feelings as they are realized in words. One can quarrel, for example, with his misuse of words like "precisely" and "strictly" (usually introduced at a place where his argument is most blurred). James Baldwin is neither the golden-voiced god who sometimes descends on us from a black cloud—like those Negro athletes or Paul Robeson in his prime—nor is he a poet from another race and sphere of life—like Langston Hughes—for whom allowances have to be made. He is simply a writer in English who has had imposed on him by circumstances a point of view made tragic by those very circumstances. All his writings are speeches out of the play which is the tragedy of his race.

Baldwin's power is his ability to express situations—the situation of being a Negro, and of being white, and of being human. Beyond this, he is perhaps too impatient to be a good novelist, and although he is a powerful essayist, his experiences are so colored with feelings that he seems unable to relate the thoughts which arise from his feelings to parallel situations that have given rise to other men's thoughts. Thus it seems important to him in his feelings about American Negroes that he should write as though there were no other Negroes, no other oppressed peoples anywhere in the world. He states: "Negroes do not,

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strictly, or legally speaking, exist in any other" country but the United States where "they are taught really to despise themselves from the moment their eyes open on the world." One suspects that for Mr. Baldwin it is sacrilege to suggest that there are Negroes outside America; and from this there follows the implication that the Negro problem is *his* problem that can only be discussed on *his* terms. Hence too his contempt for most people who, in the main, agree with him, especially for poor despised American liberals. He has, as a Negro, a right, of course, to despise liberals, but he exploits his moral advantage too much.

Sometimes by Negro Mr. Baldwin means people with black skins originating in Africa, but sometimes he defines them by their situation—that of being oppressed. And indeed if the Negro problem is resolveable, the only useful way of discussing it is to consider American Negroes in a situation which is comparable with that of workers and of Negroes elsewhere. To write as though Negroes do not exist anywhere except in America is to induce despair, to suggest that in America white and black cannot become integrated to the (rather limited) extent to which they have been, for example, in Brazil. It is in fact playing into the hands of the Black Muslims whose position is that America—and the world even—has to choose between having nothing but black or nothing but white people—by which it is meant that it would be "democratic" to have nothing but the black majority.

Mr. Baldwin would admit, I think, that when (and this is quite often) he is guided by his emotions he finds himself in a position not far from that of the Black Muslims. He quite rightly resents the claims of whites that they are superior to colored people. But in fact he thinks that the colored are superior. True, they have, like the anti-fascists, been made, almost involuntarily, better as a result of the crimes perpetrated against them, for which they are in no way responsible. Few independent witnesses would dispute this. But Mr. Baldwin also makes Henry-Miller-like generalizations about the emasculation, joylessness, lack of sensuality, etc., of white Americans to prove their inferiority to the joyous, spiritual, good, warm Negroes.

I agree that in certain ways, and not only in America, the so-called backward, primitive, oppressed, and—for the most part—colored people are "better" than us whites who form a world class of "haves" and rulers. The quality of this superiority James Baldwin admirably conveys by the word *sensual*: "To be sensual, I think, is to respect and rejoice in the force of life, of life itself, and to be present in all that one does, from the effort of loving to the breaking of bread." Negroes—and one might add (although Mr. Baldwin does not do so) a large number of

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other people in the world who are "have-nots"—are forced back onto personal values. It is by no means clear, though, whether the oppressed if they were set over their oppressors—the blacks over the whites—would not lose their "sensuality" and become as bad as the present white ruling class. Lack of sensuality is the result of running and deriving benefits from an industrial society. The "sensual" are simply the outcasts.

When he discusses white Americans and Christians, he tends to attribute to them generalized qualities. Indeed, for him, white Americans seem hardly to be people; they are an abstraction, "America." When he discusses Negroes he tends to attribute to them particularized, personal qualities. "White Americans do not believe in death, and this is why the darkness of my skin so intimidates them. And this is also why the presence of the Negro in this country can bring about its destruction. It is the responsibility of free men to trust and to celebrate what is constant—birth, struggle and death are constant, and so is love, although we may not always think so—and to apprehend the nature of change, to be able and willing to change."

Mr. Baldwin asserts that the white American does not recognize death because he does not recognize life. He does not recognize the "constants" of life in himself, and therefore he does not recognize them in the Negro. If he recognized the Negro as a being like himself, then he would recognize in himself those constants which he acknowledges in the Negro. Thus the black can "save" the white by making the white conscious of his humanity.

This position is summarized in his letter to his nephew: "*Integration* means that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it."

Much the same message is contained in the most quoted poem of Auden: "We must love one another or die." It is worth noting, however, that Auden in later editions dropped the stanza containing this line. When I asked him why he had done this, he replied, "Because we're going to die anyway." He might have added that if our living depended on our loving one another then we would all be doomed instantly. And to this he could have added that when we assert that we can all love one another, we cannot be sure that what we are saying is true.

Although Mr. Baldwin considers love is the only answer to the American race problem, it is not at all evident from his book that he loves white Americans, and at times it is even doubtful whether he loves his own people. Not that I blame him for this. What I do criticize him for is postulating a quite impossible demand as the only way of dealing with a problem that has to be solved.

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Mr. Baldwin's bias towards discussing the American Negro as though he had no characteristics in common with Negroes elsewhere or other oppressed people and classes contributes to his tendency to think that the problem can only be met by all Negroes and all white Americans being seized at the same moment by the same wave of love. My argument is that the relationship of Negro to white exists within a situation comparable to other situations. It is partly a situation of color, partly one of class. The American Negro is in effect a world proletarian who suffers under the disadvantage that he appears to be indelibly branded as such by the blackness of his skin. People used to talk about the European proletariat as Baldwin does about Negroes, as though their status was inbred and could only be changed by love (which meant it could not be changed at all). But if you change the circumstances of the workers, so long as they are white they simply become like other white people who are not workers. What is menacing about the color problem is that even if you change the status of the Negro his color remains the same. Color prejudice is extremely deep, and far more widespread than Mr. Baldwin seems to realize, since it exists all over the world, where similar circumstances (such as that of there being a majority of Negro proletarians among a minority of whites) produce similar results. Moreover, color prejudice is not confined to white Americans and Europeans. It exists between colored people themselves.

This last point is rather important, because while disapproving of the Black Muslims, Mr. Baldwin seems to accept their view that the world is divided into blacks and whites, of which the black are the majority. As a matter of fact, if the white races disappeared from the face of the earth, there would be perhaps worse color problems than there are today; for whereas white men are (though not fast enough) beginning to be ashamed of their attitude towards colored people, many Asians have little tolerance for other Asians of slightly different shades of color, and none at all for Negroes.

It seems best then to consider the color problem in America as the problem of a proletariat, with the special difficulty attaching to it that Negroes are labelled by their color as proletarians. Mr. Baldwin himself sometimes states the situation of the Negroes as if it were that of the industrialized and unorganized working class in Europe in the nineteenth century. He writes:

> Even the most doltish and servile Negro could scarcely fail to be impressed by the disparity between his situation and that of the people for whom he worked; Negroes who were neither doltish nor servile did not feel that they were doing anything

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> wrong when they robbed white people. In spite of the Puritan-Yankee equation of virtue with well-being, Negroes had excellent reasons for doubting that money was made or kept by any very striking adherence to the Christian virtues; it certainly did not work that way for black Christians. In any case, white people, who had robbed black people of their liberty and who profited by this theft every hour that they lived, had no moral ground on which to stand. They had the judges, the juries, the shot-guns, the law—in a word, power. But it was a criminal power, to be feared but not respected, and to be outwitted in any way whatever. And those virtues preached but not practiced by the white world were merely another means of holding Negroes in subjection.

Substitute "worker" for Negro, and "capitalist" or "imperialist" for "white people," and this reads like a Marxist writing in 1860 about the German or the British working class.

So-called capitalists have on the whole learned to legislate away the social problems which logically seemed to lead to irreconcileable positions ending in revolution. The color problem is the twentieth-century version of what in the nineteenth century was the problem of the proletariat. In theory at least it should today be soluble without revolution. What Mr. Baldwin calls "love"—at any rate all generous feeling—is required to support the legislation and anticipate the very dangerous situation which will arise unless a great deal is done very quickly. The great contribution of Mr. Baldwin is that he finds words to express what one knows to be true: how it feels to be an American Negro. Within his own works he has solved the problem of integration: not by love, but by imagination using words which know no class nor color bars.

Stephen Spender

IS THE READER NECESSARY?

THE AGE OF SUSPICION. By Nathalie Sarraute. Translated by Maria Jolas. George Braziller. $4.

A new mode of didacticism has conquered the arts, is indeed the "modern" element in art. Its central dogma is the idea that art must evolve. Its result is the work whose main intention is to advance

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the history of the genre, to break ground in matters of technique. The para-military imagery of *avant-garde* and *arrière-garde* perfectly express the new didacticism. Art is the army by which human sensibility advances implacably into the future; and the hunger of modern art for ever newer and more formidable techniques finds an unappetizing parallel in the modern military's commitment to ever newer and, however unusable, bigger weaponry. This mainly negative relation of individual talent to tradition, which gives rise to the rapid and built-in obsolescence of each new item of technique, and each new use of materials, has vanquished the conception of art as giving immediate accessible pleasure, and produced a body of work which is principally didactic and admonitory. As everyone knows by now, the point of Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase" is not to represent anyone, much less a nude, descending a staircase, but to teach a lesson on how natural forms may be broken into a series of kinetic planes. The point of the prose works of Stein and Beckett is to show how diction, punctuation, syntax, and narrative order can be recast to express continuous impersonal states of consciousness. The point of the music of Boulez and Stockhausen and Cage is to show how the possibilities of silence, cacophony, and certain constructed instruments can be exploited.

The victory of the modern didacticism has been most complete in music and painting, where the most respected works are those which give little pleasure but make important advances in the technical revolutions which have taken place in these arts. Compared with music and painting, the novel, like the cinema, lags well to the rear of the battlefield. A body of "difficult" novels comparable to Abstract Expressionist painting and *musique concrète* has not overrun the territory of critically respectable fiction. On the contrary, most of the novel's few brave ventures to the front-line of modernism get marooned there. After a few years they seem merely idiosyncratic, for no troops follow the brave C.O. and back him up. Novels which, in the order of difficulty, are comparable to the music of Gian-Carlo Menotti and the painting of Bernard Buffet, are garnished with the highest critical acclaim. The ease of access that causes embarrassment in music and painting is no embarrassment in the novel, which remains intransigently *arrière-garde*.

Why should this be so? The sociological explanations—the novel as a middle-class art form, and so forth—don't convince. I think the explanation for the resistance of the novel to the "modern" is simpler, and follows from what it is as a physical object: a book that has to be read. Compare reading a novel with looking at a painting. The frustration the spectator may experience standing before a largely empty or

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unintelligible canvas is eased by the fact that he doesn't have to look very long. He may, in fact, just glance. Though he may not really understand or enjoy the painting, he will at least know what that painter does. But a book has to be read through, and neither ten seconds nor a half-hour will do. Again, compare reading a novel with listening to a piece of music. The music is played; the listener only has to sit in the concert auditorium or be in the same room as the hi-fi. If he doesn't like it, at least he need not make the effort to hear. At worst, he has simply not enjoyed what he has heard. With the written word, however, the situation is very different. Reading is an effort of concentration, in a way that hearing is not. (Understanding what one hears is another matter.) The book does not go on by itself, like a piece of music or a film. It must be followed, the pages must be turned, the reader must to some extent understand what he reads or he cannot go on. If you don't like Stockhausen, you can still be physically present at a concert, and know you have heard a piece of his through; but it is next to impossible to read through a novel that one does not enjoy or understand. What I am saying is that the conditions of pleasure in reading differ from those of seeing and hearing, and diminish the gap which, in the case of the other arts I have mentioned, normally separates the mass audience, with its perennial distaste for technical innovation in the arts, from the elite audience, which prides itself on its educated openness to experiment. This is the reason, not because the novel is historically a popular or a more conservative art than painting and music, that fewer novels have been written on the front-line of modernism.

There are some, of course—some "difficult" novels primarily concerned with technique; novels not meant to be read, but rather to have their lessons assimilated. The first great example, and still the purest, is *Finnegan's Wake*. *Finnegan's Wake* is not meant to be read at all; it is meant to be read about, talked about, written about. By this I don't mean to say that Joyce did not intend anybody to read it. On the contrary, he expected his readers to devote their whole lives to it. But this is just the point. Just what proves it to be, by ordinary standards, unreadable. It is enough to read in it, or read quotations from it in critical articles. *Finnegan's Wake* is the mammoth forerunner of a number of plotless, word-heavy novels—the books of Stein, Beckett, and Burroughs come to mind—which are best suited to be dipped into at any point and read in for a while. But these are isolated forays.

Lately, however, the situation appears to be changing. A whole school—should I say a battalion?—of important unreadable novels is being produced in France. The earlier and to me more interesting ones

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are by Maurice Blanchot, George Bataille, and Pierre Klossowski; most of these were written in the 1940's and are as yet untranslated into English. Better known, and mostly translated, are a "second generation" of books written in the 1950's, by (among others) Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, and Nathalie Sarraute. All these books, however they differ from each other—whether crammed with Heideggerian phenomenology, behaviorist psychology, or plain old numerology —have this in common: they are difficult to read, and they are largely boring. They are not literally unreadable, or unlikeable. I'm fond of and, when fortified by dexamyl, able to read Blanchot, Bataille, and Klossowski with pleasure; and there are pages of Nathalie Sarraute that I admire very much. Yet it is a taste I cannot wholeheartedly defend; for as novels these books are maddening, and I have never been able to read any of them straight through. But I console myself with the thought that that's what these writers intend. They want to bore the reader, to tax him with their subcutaneous ruminations and dry enumerations and inventories of things, their interminable slow-motion descriptions of doors opening and nameless persons advancing across unidentified rooms. They want to frustrate the reader, by purposely withholding a plot and a clearly distinguishable cast of characters. These writers want to make the reader work for his pleasure. Ultimately, they would rather not give pleasure at all, but just make the reader work.

Such novels, as I see it, are mainly designed to be written, only secondarily to be read. What is important is that they have been written and published and noticed—that is, received into the on-going tradition of the novel. I'm not for a moment suggesting any literary fraud. There can be no doubt of the refined intelligence and absolute sincerity of these writers, and of their wish to be read (their demand that the reader put himself into harness and go to work). Still, it is more fun to read about their books than to read them. And most fun of all, to read a brilliantly written manifesto by the best of the recent French novelists, Nathalie Sarraute, in which the theory behind her novels is fully and elegantly set forth.

When reading the four essays of Nathalie Sarraute that make up *The Age of Suspicion,* I kept thinking of two other manifestoes on what the novel should be, Viriginia Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and Mary McCarthy's "The Fact in Fiction." Sarraute scorns as "naive" Virginia Woolf's dismissal of naturalism and objective realism, her call to the modern novelist to examine "the dark places of psychology." But Sarraute is equally hard on the position represented by Mary McCarthy's essay, which may be read as a rebuttal of Virginia

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Woolf, calling as it does for a return to the old novelistic virtues of setting forth a real world, giving a sense of verisimilitude, and constructing memorable characters.

It is easier to understand why Sarraute will have none of realism. It makes things simply too cozy and comfortable, this immediate recognition that the life-like induces. Life is not that life-like, a modern reader suspects. Truly, as Sarraute says, the genius of the age is suspicion. Or, if not its genius, I would say, at least its besetting vice. I sympathize with what she objects to in the old-fashioned novel: *Vanity Fair* and *Buddenbrooks,* when I reread them last month, however marvelous they still seemed, also made me wince. I could not stand the omnipotent author showing me that's how life is, making me compassionate and tearful; with his obstreperous irony, his confidential air of perfectly knowing his characters and leading me, the reader, to feel I knew them too. I no longer trust novels which fully satisfy my passion to understand. Sarraute is right, too, that the novel's traditional machinery of furnishing a scene, and describing and moving about characters, does not justify itself. Who really cares about the furniture of so-and-so's room, or whether he lit a cigarette or wore a dark gray suit? Great movies have shown that the cinema can invest pure physical action—whether fleeting and small-scale like the wig changing in *L'Avventura,* or important like the advance through the forest in *The Big Parade*—with more magic than words ever can, and more economically, too.

Less easy to understand, though, is Sarraute's insistence that psychological analysis in the novel is equally obsolete and misguided. "The word 'psychology,'" Sarraute says, "is one that no present day writer can hear spoken with regard to himself without casting his eyes to the ground and blushing." By psychology in the novel, she means Woolf, Joyce, Proust: novels which explore a substratum of hidden thoughts and feelings beneath action, the depiction of which replaces the concern with character and plot. All Joyce brought up from these depths, she remarks, was an uninterrupted flow of words. And Proust, too, failed. In the end Proust's elaborate psychological dissections recompose themselves into realistic characters, in which the practiced reader "immediately recognizes a rich man of the world in love with a kept woman, a prominent, awkward, gullible doctor, a parvenu bourgeoise or a snobbish 'great lady,' all of which will soon take their places in the vast collection of fictitious characters that people his imaginary museum."

Actually Sarraute's novels are not so unlike Joyce's as she thinks. One understands her rejection of psychology only when one sees that what she wants herself is precisely the psychological, but (and this is

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the basis of her complaint against Proust) without the possibility of any conversion back into "character" and "plot." She is against psychological *dissection,* for that assumes there is a body to dissect. She is against a provisional psychology, against psychology as a new means to the old end. The use of the psychological microscope must not be intermittent, a device merely. This means a radical recasting of the novel. Not only must the novelist not tell a story. He must not distract the reader with gross events like a murder or a great love. The more minute, the less sensational the event the better. Thus the 239 pages of *Martereau* consist of the ruminations of a nameless young man, an interior decorator, about the artistic aunt and rich businessman uncle with whom he lives, and about an older not-so-well-off man named Martereau, concerning why and in what circumstances he feels comfortable with them, and why and when he feels he is succumbing to the force of their personalities and the objects with which they surround themselves. The aunt and uncle's project of buying a house in the country provide the only "action" of the book, and if for a time it is suspected that Martereau has defrauded the uncle in the matter of the house, you can bet that in the end all suspicions are allayed. In *The Planetarium*—296 pages, and a more subtle and satisfying book—something does happen. A social-climbing young man, shamelessly trying to gain admittance to the circle of a rich, vain, and very famous woman writer, actually does manage to dispossess his doting gullible aunt from her five-room apartment. But Sarraute's characters do not really ever act. They scheme, they throb, they shudder—under the impact of the minutiae of daily life. This is the real subject of her novels. Since analysis is out—that is, the speaking, interpreting author is out—Sarraute's novels are logically written only in the first person, even when the interior musings use "she" and "he."

What Sarraute proposes is a novel written in continuous monologue, in which dialogue between characters is a functional extension of monologue, "real" speech a continuation of silent speech. This kind of dialogue she calls "sub-conversation." It is comparable to theatrical dialogue in that the author does not intervene or interpret, but unlike theatrical dialogue it is not broken up or assigned to clearly separable characters. (She has some particularly sharp and mocking words to say about the creaky *he said's, she replied's, so-and-so declared's* with which most novels are strewn.) Dialogue must "become vibrant and swollen with those tiny inner movements that propel and extend it." The novel must disavow the means of classical psychology—introspection—and proceed instead by immersion. It must plunge the reader

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"into the stream of those subterranean dramas of which Proust only had time to obtain a rapid aerial view, and concerning which he observed and reproduced nothing but the broad motionless outlines." The novel must record without comment the direct and purely sensory contact with things and persons which the "I" of the novelist experiences. Abstaining from all creating of likenesses (Sarraute hands that over to the cinema), the novel must preserve and promote "that element of indetermination, of opacity and mystery that one's own actions always have for the one who lives them."

There is something exhilarating in this conception of the novel, based as it is on an unlimited respect for the complexity of human feelings and sensations. A view which regards "the efforts of Henry James or Proust to take apart the delicate wheelworks of our inner mechanisms" as wielding a pick and shovel has dazzling standards of psychological refinement indeed. Who would dare to contradict Sarraute when she says that the feelings are an immense mobile mass in which almost anything can be found; and that no theory, least of all a cipher like psychoanalysis, can give an account of all its movements?

But views of the complexity of feeling and sensation are one thing, programs for the novel another. True, all accounts of motives simplify. For that reason the future of fiction, of new techniques for representing motives, remains open. But I cannot agree with Sarraute that the passion for intelligibility, although necessarily purchased at the price of simplification, is a dangerous one. Character may be (as she insists) an ocean, a confluence of tides and streams and eddies, but I do not see the privileged value of immersion. Skin-diving has its place, but so has oceanic cartography, what Sarraute contemptuously dismisses as "the aerial view." Man is a creature who is designed to live on the surface; he lives in the depths—whether terrestrial, oceanic, or psychological—at his peril. I do not understand her contempt for the novelist's effort to transmute the watery shapeless depths of experience into solid stuff, to impose outlines, to give fixed shape and sensuous body to the world. That this should not be done in the old ways goes without saying. But I cannot agree that it should not be done at all.

Sarraute invites the writer to resist the desire to amuse his contemporaries, to reform them, to instruct them, or to fight for their emancipation; and simply, without trimming or smoothing or overcoming contradictions, to present "reality" (the word is Sarraute's) as he sees it, with as great a sincerity and sharpness of vision as he is capable. I will not here dispute the question of whether the novel should amuse, reform, or instruct (why should it not?) but only point out what a

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tendentious definition of reality she proposes. Reality, for Sarraute, means a reality that is rid of the "preconceived ideas and ready-made images that encase it." It is opposed to "the surface reality that everyone can easily see and which, for want of anything better, everyone uses." According to Sarraute, for a writer to be in contact with reality he must "attain to something that is thus far unknown, which it seems to him he is the first to have seen."

But what is the point of this multiplication of realities? For truly, it is the plural rather than the singular that Sarraute should have used. If each writer must "bring to light this fragment of reality that is his own"—and all the whales and sharks have been noted; it is new species of plankton she is after—then the writer is not only a maker of fragments, but condemned to being an exponent only of what is original in his own subjectivity. When he comes to the literary marketplace bearing his jar of tiny and as yet uncatalogued marine specimens, are we to welcome him in the name of science? (The writer as marine biologist.) Of sport? (The writer as deep sea diver.) Why does he deserve an audience? How many fragments of reality will readers of novels tolerate? How many do they need?

It really is science, or better yet sport, that Sarraute has in mind. Hence her revulsion against the beautiful and the pleasurable as such. The writer must renounce "all desire to write 'beautifully' for the pleasure of doing so, to give aesthetic enjoyment to himself or to his readers." Style is "capable of beauty only in the sense that an athlete's gesture is beautiful; the better it is adapted to its purpose, the greater the beauty." The purpose, remember, is the recording of the writer's unique apprehension of an unknown reality. But the final justification for this activity—what for Sarraute frees the novel from all moral and social purposes—is that the novelist is after truth (or a fragment of it) like the scientist, and after functional exercise like the athlete. The only morality the new novel admits is the morality of scientific truth and of strenuous effort.

Thus Sarraute summons the novel to take its belated place in the anti-hedonistic revolution that has already conquered painting and music —to renounce pleasure and beauty, because these are attached to "familiar appearances." It is a stern appeal, and may find a willing audience. In an overcomplex world in which most things are painful or boring or difficult, it may seem tender-minded to object to the novel becoming so also. But if this is the future of the novel, then there should be corresponding changes in the physical object itself, the book. In such a future, with novels addressed to a highly restricted audience, the fact

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that the book, being mass produced, cannot have the "value" that a painting has, becomes an anomaly. The solution might be to issue each book in a single copy only, written out in long-hand by the author, to be bought by collectors of private realities and by museums and book galleries where the public will wait on line to sample it for a half-hour or so. Another solution would be to stop printing books altogether, and make their contents known orally, in book concerts, during which the author would read for two hours from his works; that way, one would only have to listen, and catch what one can, thus obviating the arduous task of solitary reading with all its hazards of putting the book down and falling asleep. A third solution would be to have such books read only by critics, who would then submit the author's findings and technical innovations to other authors and to the public. Then we would at least know where the army of art was advancing, on what obscure hill or over what remote atoll it was waging a fierce and costly battle. We would be relieved to know, if we are writers ourselves, that that battle need not be fought again.

Susan Sontag

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOUBLE-THINK

ON THE PREVENTION OF WAR. By John Strachey. St. Martin's Press. $5.95.

It is often forgotten that many of us will die *before* the nuclear holocaust occurs. Ordinary death has not really been transcended by the brilliant death-thinking of the new breed of rational Doomsters. I suspect they not only forget this, but that the opportunity to forget it in their work accounts for much of their enthusiasm. On religious matters, I have never trusted scientists. Either they are pure dualists, and thus sterile; or naive synthesizers, and thus too dynamic for the public good. One way or another, scientists suffer, along with the rest of us, from the virtues of science, but never so clearly as in their new, heady effort to conceive death rationally in global, supra-historical terms. They even play games with it. The essence of the game, apart from the pure joy of it, seems to be to discover whether in the reaction to an action occasioned by an imagined provocation implied in a) an accidental and b) a necessary event (the games are quite complicated,

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which is why you need a computer to play), an "acceptable" number of people on your side will die. If so, you win—I guess. If not, you deal another hand. (Acceptable *to whom* has never been made clear, which indicates it is not an important part of the game.)

The scientific rationality which is so finely honed in the course of playing these games turns out to be not quite so stable as it seems. For example, at the time of the Cuban crisis, a high official of the Hudson Institute addressed a letter to *The New York Times* warning 180,000,000 Americans not to be too pleased that the Russians were showing themselves to be what we knew they were all along anyway—that is, chicken. The pleasure might provoke reactions to actions that had not been scripted in, in which case you have to throw away the whole scenario and start over again.

The English will probably never be so rational as we are. Certainly John Strachey is not so rational in his appraisal of American nuclear thinking. Strachey is a leading social-democratic spokesman on military matters in England, connected with the Institute for Strategic Studies (which publishes a bulletin happily entitled *Survival*), and is a former and perhaps a future Secretary of State for War. But in order to study these matters thoroughly, he had to come over here and talk to Brodie and Kahn, Morgenstern and Wohlstetter, and many others. Appropriately enough, we are the leaders in nuclear thinking. But this book convinced me that the English have a great deal to contribute to what should be a joint political and intellectual effort. This is particularly so since the British, who no longer are a world power, have a remarkable understanding of the nature of power.

The English (especially under a socialist government) are in a position to develop the basic *two-mindedness* that must constitute a realistic approach to the nuclear dilemma. The dilemma might be summed up in this way: Unilateral surrender is either politically impossible or inadvisable or both, and which it is hardly matters under the realistic approach. Yet the present balance of deterrent terror, which has kept us alive this long, is clearly too dangerous to be accepted as adequate, and no simple refinements of the balance can correct the danger. Disarmament as a practical matter is coequal with some rough form of world hegemony, and so it is no less difficult than it is necessary. Or, to be very simple, the balance must be preserved and thus perfected while at the same time being liquidated. Popularly speaking, this is inconceivable. From the point of view of the realistic imagination, it is the *sine qua non* of even the possibility of continued existence. (I say possibility, since very clearly time is against us, and

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the best policy may prove to be inadequate; but then again, it will not make any difference, since there will be no one left to care.) The shortest, surest route to liquidation of the terror is merger, which is really a kind of mutual unilateral surrender. Indeed, disarmament without a Russo-American hegemony is conceivable *only* rhetorically, and for popular consumption: the realistic imagination immediately perceives its impossibility. On this very important point, John Strachey is exceptionally persuasive.

Two-mindedness is the answer, the hard answer. (Of course, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen—retreat to the dim parlor of righteousness, where it is meaningful to say simply that the Bomb is bad and to inform your friends that you are against it.) So Strachey's book begins with a compelling statement and explanation of the present state of the balance, of its necessity—and of the plain fact that we are alive because of it. That is, I believe, the proper beginning of a book on cold war strategy. But like all writers on the subject, he lingers over the horrors of nuclear war. This is becoming a convention, which has its value in that we will have to be sufficiently horrified to prevent the disaster. But it is an intellectual waste, for the most important part of the discussion *begins* on the assumption of original horror (which has replaced original sin on our historically active eschatology).

Since Strachey is all for balance, he is against the SAC counterforce view, for second-strike invulnerability and the build-up of conventional forces—and very passionately for relieving these forces of the burden of tactical atomic weapons, an absurd invitation to escalate. (His description of NATO doctrine and practice is almost as horrifying, in its own way, as the details of nuclear blast.) Again emphasizing balance, what he most fears is the spread of nuclear armament among more and more sovereign states—what is known in the trade as the Nth country problem. He thus believes in the superlative importance of a test-ban treaty, which is distinguished from everything else by being genuinely and immediately possible: each side has already been euchred into an embarrassing agreement which then had to be reneged on. A test-ban treaty will be so important not because it will solve the fall-out problem, nor even because it will provide some practice in agreement, but because it will require reciprocal or joint Russo-American action against testing by others and thus constitutes the beginning of a practical power-solution to the greatly feared Nth country problem.

The whole book is tight and brilliant, almost without let-up; but probably the most original section is the discussion of disarmament. He is, for example, exceptionally perceptive in separating propaganda

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from genuine possibilities, while recognizing the necessity of the former. He understands disarmament as a negative arms race, and with proper two-mindedness he does not conceive that it begins with a halt to armament, but in fact accompanies it in its development. His main proposition is that the image of a world of disarmed sovereign states is childish, if not an actual contradiction in terms; that any realistic disarmament immediately implies some rough form of world government; that any such hegemony must be based on the possession and use of power, and consequently that the hegemony which *is* disarmament can only be based on Russo-American agreement now or, failing that and suffering a spread of nuclear capacity, on an agreement a decade or two hence among the half-dozen or so nuclear powers of that day. On the second alternative we would need an unconscionable amount of luck to survive the passage to the bargaining table.

The three big "outs" from this hard line of reasoning are: 1) the refusal to think; 2) a nuclear war can be fought and "won"; and 3) surrender now. At this late date, one can only scream and splutter about the first two; the third is a great deal more complicated than the unilateralists seem to feel it is, and much more potential than people who think with a jutting jaw are able to understand. (It is, in fact, a second act sequence in the counterforce scenario.) Surrender is no more "unthinkable" than the unthinkable that Mr. Kahn is so expert at thinking about. After one or two accidental or intentional firings, it would clearly be an immediate political possibility—and perhaps an overwhelming demand. Ask yourself the obvious: After an exchange of nuclear salvos, would not everyone still "alive"—for himself and all the dead—wish he had surrendered, if that could have prevented it? No amount of shoulder-straightening and tummy-tucking can alter the obvious answer. We are not any longer talking about force on a human or even an animal scale: *There is nothing worth fighting a nuclear war for, because nothing we value will survive it.* Yet we continue to threaten the act, and no one seems to know how to stop. The problem of surrender of this capacity to threaten is not merely or primarily the political but even more the psychological difficulty of it. We might want to, but we couldn't stand it: that degree of unilateral submission is highly unstable even in contemplation. (Note that since it is and must be a "cold" war, involved decisively with the psychology of the threat of force, psychology is the primary category—including the psychology of suicide.) In a broad sense, "deterrence" is a very poor term to describe this situation since, unlike murder-deterrence, for example, nuclear-deterrence does not contemplate that the deterrent system or the

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society it is supposed to protect will survive *any failure*. Like the sting of the bee—one attack, one punishment, finis.

What I am suggesting is that this impossible underlying character of the situation is what has produced the excessive rationality of our cold-warrior elite. The crazier the situation becomes, the more we witness their logical aplomb. *This is their way of being hysterical.* They are also out of balance because of the institutional commitment or compulsion growing out of the very bad habits we established during our period of atomic monopoly. (Strachey is very shrewd on this point.) Nuclear thought started out on a very simple basis, and is still busy combating this initial simplicity: All we had to do was have it and not use it. But since we had it and weren't going to use it anyway, why not threaten with it every once in a while? That is how we got into this crazy business of suicide-deterrence. How we get out of it is to become seriously two-minded, as suggested above, and particularly to begin balancing the risks—undertaking a more active peace-risk instead of being "satisfied" with the immense passive war-risk which has haunted us day by day.

Strachey is firmly despairing that nothing we can count on doing soon will create a *secure* peace. I think that is clear: we are going to have to settle for—and try for—something less. Balance is all, and no balance is adequate. The Soviet-American death-grip has passed the stage where anyone can contemplate blowing it apart. The only way out is to strengthen the survival-alliance created by it, to foster the mutual unilateral disarmament adopted by each and then forced on the rest of the world. After all, that was the original founding idea of the United Nations.

In his debate with Bertrand Russell a few years back, Sidney Hook made a very effective point—that without our nuclear threat, the Russians could demand the delivery to them of any individual, even Sidney Hook. That frightened and affected me at the time; but I have since thought it over and compared it to other fears and effects, and am prepared to state now that if he still doesn't want to go, I will. We need not be so traditional about the heroism of free men. We might note that we are in fact *not* free—not free of this death system. In a very basic sense, we are free only to blow up the world.

David T. Bazelon

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THE NEW SCHLEMIHL

V. By Thomas Pynchon. J. B. Lippincott Co. $5.95.

The best review of *V.* is the drawing on the dust cover, which depicts the bare letter V. on a ruled desert-colored plain stretching away to a flat horizon. The texture of the prose has been produced by a deliberate flattening technique, despite the most varied and detailed scenery. The effect is that of a super-scientist examining life under a microscope and taking a detached interest in the movements of the myriad forms he sees. To support this effect the writing has been carefully excised of emotion. Human activity, to Pynchon, is "a succession of encounters between groups of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care." His characters are perpetually baffled and subdued by the objects of an "inanimate world," the symbols of which are always coming between them in the form of electrodes or electric wires in a man's forearm, catastrophic balloons rising into the air, ineradicable stains, false teeth, personified automobiles, and so forth.

The encounter between animate and inanimate is illustrated by two narrative strands which mingle from time to time but which seem to have no basic connection. In the more realistic parts of the book a self-designated "schlemihl" named Benny Profane makes of himself "a human yo-yo" and bounces through the 1950's, drifting into the Navy and out again, working at pointless jobs in several American cities, joining when he can a gang of shadow-friends in New York called the Whole Sick Crew, and above all killing time by "yo-yoing" back and forth over the lines of public transportation. The rest of the book is taken up with the efforts of a man who refers to himself in the third person as Stencil to trace back and discover the identity of a mysterious woman known as "V.", who was somehow connected with his father, a widely-traveling member of the English foreign service. The quest is bursting with metaphysical implications, and as V. shows up in ever-shifting guises all over the world and in incidents dating back to the turn of the century, Thomas Pynchon has ample opportunity to create esoteric melodrama—usually involving a ridiculous British diplomatic corps—in Alexandria, Florence, South Africa, Cairo, Paris, Malta, etc. By the time one has read one's way through diplomatic crises all over the Empire, through the bars and ships and sewers of the eastern seacoast of America, and through parties, cars, subways, buses, ferries, and a complete nose-job in harrowing detail, one must grant Pynchon the most encyclopedic sense of scene since Tolstoy.

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The difference is that having cast his nets so widely and deftly, he comes up with so few fish.

It seems the author himself is a victim of "the inanimate world" his characters are so helpless against. Through its very technique *V.* loses the fight against mechanical domination and becomes only one more symptom of the disease it portrays. It is the logical novel of our civilization, the educated technician's novel—a novel of facts, constructed by a Master Engineer. The handling of detail reminds me of the paintings of Dali, where one sees objects melted, scattered and tangled over great wastelands. Dali communicates his fascinated revulsion for objects via an extremely slick technique, but his point of view is so simple-minded, so deadly, that his paintings turn into the kind of objects they represent. His humor is of the adolescent graveyard genre—hah-hah look how dead we are—but the joke's on him, because there is a difference between life and death, and naked symbols leave us cold. We know better: we have known art that makes man the most he can be. Thus with Pynchon: the scenes become photographs, the speeches mere words, the characters counters, the action a plastic tape unrolling from a computer spool. The symbols are only symbols, and the characters remain so subservient to them and to their creator that they lose all power to surprise us and capture our belief.

In the story of the yo-yo, Benny Profane, Pynchon might have discovered his deepest novel. As Profane wanders through girls, jobs, neighborhoods, one feels the sadness and desperation of those who are spun to the borderlands of organized society and who drift there defeated. These are the feelings that remain only undertones in the joy-chasing of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road,* but Pynchon is often capable of bringing them through with tenderness and insight.

One might remark here on the number of modern novelists who have chosen schlemihls for their heroes, despite the limited possibilities a schlemihl offers for heroism. Pynchon's conception of the schlemihl is unique in that it departs from that of the Yiddish word, which means a natural-born bumbler who invariably messes things up for himself and others. Pynchon makes it clear that Benny Profane is a schlemihl not only by nature but *by his own choice,* implying that a schlemihl is simply a man who chooses to remain passive in every situation that life offers. For writers closer to the Yiddish conception, a schlemihl is not merely a human yo-yo, but a person who, though prone to bungling, can still act, and even take arms against his unfortunate disposition. The schlemihls of Saul Bellow or Bruce Jay Friedman, for example, are struggling to release themselves, and the reader struggles

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right with them. In the novels of Bernard Malamud the schlemihl succeeds at last in becoming his own special kind of *Mensch,* for whom the reader will laugh and cry, whom he will delight in and hold to his heart. Poor Benny Profane is undercut by his very name, as are his friends Rachel Owlglass, Roony and Mafia Winsome, Pig Bodine, Slap, Raoul, Fang, Sphere and Melvin. Can one explore the nature of paralysis by manipulating symbolic cripples?

The other half of the book displays awesome virtuosity, but tne greater the virtuosity, the less readable I find it. During the quest for V. the style juggles farce, melodrama, mysticism and old-fashioned horror. Despite the moments—as in the South African section —when Pynchon truly captures the tone of casual terror which has ravaged the century of V., he is writing for the most part in the tradition of the international detective-story, and freighting his detective with so much metaphysical baggage that the case becomes impenetrable. The detective finds the elusive V. blockaded by rubbish-heaps of arty deadness.

The search for V., after all, falls squarely within the tradition of the quest for the metaphysical absolute as it is embodied in the American novel. The trouble with the lady V., seen in the light of this tradition, is that she is *only* an essence, *only* an absolute. Surely no creature could be more symbolic than Moby Dick, but he is also a gigantically palpable white whale, and we know exactly why Ahab must take him, symbol or not. Likewise with Huck and Jim: we know that the freedom they seek is in some sense abstract and that the river can only float them on to recapture; but on the other hand they are going down that river, and the water is so real a man can drown in it. And with Gatsby—Daisy may not measure up to the image for which he has created his fabulous career, but she is a fleshly, living woman with a voice full of money. And even the modest heroes of Hemingway look for their heaven in a moment of physical truth, a day of love, and a rare meal. I cannot believe these objects of the Great Quest suffer for their concreteness. It is their substantiality that gives them emotional shape and meaning; no reader can simply *care* as much in the abstract.

The melodrama, in short, is a cop-out, which allows the writer to be magician, raconteur, linguist, cartographer, diplomatic historian, and tourist guide—everything but novelist. It is fashionable, I know, to believe that the times are not ripe for novel writing, but I have yet to see in any of the books which hide behind this assumption evidence of a basic change in human nature. Granted that the environment

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presents a new set of discouragements, and that many, beaten, end in submission, human yo-yos; still, the novelist does less than he might if he is content with merely chronicling, or souping-up, or fancifying the yo-yoing. If passivity is accepted at its face value, self-exploration easily thins to self-indulgence; and when one's vision of life is vitiated, life itself begins to wither away. The novel of self-indulgence is not only a drag in itself but a lie about the possibilities of living and writing.

Pynchon comes closest to a confrontation with his assumptions in the scene in which Benny leaves Rachel, and she tries to tell him that he's just using the role of "schlemihl" to protect himself. For a page or two, the dialogue becomes true; there is a possibility of involvement and discovery. But the author chooses the easy moral—Benny hasn't the guts for love, he flees—and the coast is clear for more exotic maze-making.

After all is said and done, however, I cannot feel that Pynchon's mistakes will prove fatal to him. He is a writer of incredible range and intelligence, incapable of stupidity or bad taste. In a way these virtues are almost limitations, when one thinks of the many narrow talents in this country who mixed their gifts with a kind of boorishness and childishness. Pynchon seems to be a representative of a new generation, a generation of old young men, prematurely sophisticated, coolly omniscient without ever having passed through the stages of involvement. The only credo that *V.* offers—"keep cool but care"—may be sensible, but is far removed from the cranky intensity that leads to great art. Perhaps if Pynchon will throw down the metaphysical apparatus and raise something more particular just as high, he will yet give us the whole alphabet of emotion.

Jeremy Larner

ANTI- AND PSEUDO-INTELLECTUALS

ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM IN AMERICAN LIFE. By Richard Hofstadter. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

Anti-intellectualism is, of course, not limited to America, yet it has often assumed a peculiar virulence here. In this superb volume, Richard Hofstadter traces some of the major sources of anti-intellectualism in American history. Hofstadter is among the very few American historians who combine original scholarship with an un-

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failing sense of the problems relevant to our age, his new book, just like its predecessors, is topical as well as learned.

Perhaps the most original of these interlinked essays are those dealing with "The Religion of the Heart." Hofstadter shows the somewhat paradoxical development of Protestant religious thought in this country. Early Puritan religion was based on a firm tradition which saw the minister as a learned man, a scholarly intellectual and educational leader. But with the rise of evangelicalism and revivalism, the decline of the stern Puritan ascendancy, and the drive to win the West for Christianity, the ideal image of the minister changed: it became that of a crusader and exhorter, a catcher of souls. From the Great Awakening to Billy Graham one notices a progressive primitivization of the Christian message, a growing dissociation of sensibilities; religion came to stand for emotion and to be inimical to mind. By the middle of the nineteenth-century a clergyman complained that there was "an impression, somewhat general, that an intellectual clergyman is deficient in piety, and that an eminently pious minister is deficient in intellect." In their efforts to win over to Christianity the unchurched frontiersmen and the vast secularized urban masses, evangelical spokesmen gradually evolved a form of muscular Christianity stressing the "practical" values of their message. The plain style and intellectually demanding approach of Puritan preaching declined to the folkish sentimentalism of Billy Sunday or of Bruce Barton's portrayal of Christ as a booster: "Jesus was the greatest scrapper that ever lived." Hofstadter shows how the audience of the religious performer changed the very nature of the performance. As the minister, no longer preaching to a stable and traditional audience, came to be viewed as a salesman of the gospel to unchurched millions, he adopted the characteristic vulgarity of the drummer as he played up to the anti-intellectual prejudices of his audience.

In the twentieth century, the religion of the heart preached by the earlier revivalists and evangelical preachers finally assumed its most anti-intellectual form among those neglected and forgotten people of the Bible Belt who were engaged in a hopeless battle against the spirit of modern urban America. Here fundamentalism appealed to all those who felt their traditional certainties undermined by the rising tide of scepticism, learning and modern education. And in our days, the fundamentalist mind, having been routed in its battle agaist encroaching modernity, increasingly turns in desperation toward the politics of the extreme right. When the "Scribes and the Pharisees of the Twentieth Century" seem to have conquered the land, there remains only the

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hope for one tremendous cleansing upheaval, a spiritual Armageddon, when absolute good will finally defeat absolute evil and the Children of Light will utterly destroy the Children of Darkness. Hofstadter here shows convincingly how the fundamentalist reference to the unspoiled goodness of old-fashioned religion and its primitivistic concern with the simple and natural life is counterposed to the spoiled sophistication, learning, subtlety and cunning of the city-slickers, and nourishes the appeals of the know-nothing demagogues of the extreme right.

In the chapter on the "Politics of Democracy," Hofstadter traces a curve of development somewhat similar to that of American religion. The Founding Fathers were intellectuals, in fact theirs is one of the very few cases in which intellectuals have held power. But in the nineteenth century the requirements of mass democracy soon forced the gentleman intellectual from the political scene. As popular democracy became ascendant, it stressed the superiority of inborn, natural, intuitive and folkish wisdom and promoted distrust of the ratiocination of the cultivated. Jacksonian democracy repudiated the learned guidance of the sophisticated gentlemen, just as the evangelical reaction against Puritanism had repudiated a learned religion in favor of the wisdom of the heart and direct intuitive access to God. The cultivated élite meanwhile retreated into a thin-blooded and genteel isolation from the main stream of political events. Politics and mind began to be seen as antithetical. The political scene was now dominated by men who gloried in their lack of concern for things intellectual. Politics was defined as hard, demanding, and masculine work; morals and ideas, education and culture, on the other hand came to be regarded as feminine. The hard-driving politicians of the Gilded Age implanted in the popular mind the idea that educated men were at best impracticable reformers and effeminate dreamers somehow unsuited to the serious business of politics among plain and natural American males. This image receded in the Progressive era and, again, during the New Deal, yet it still retains a powerful appeal today.

The chapters which Hofstadter devotes to the anti-intellectualism of American business, to its emphasis on hard-headed practicality and its concern with applied rather than theoretical problems are less novel. Here Hofstadter goes over well-trodden ground without coming up with much that is peculiarly new or illuminating. But the last few essays dealing with American education are again of the highest excellence. In his fierce dissection of the ideology of "life adjustment" among American educators in particular, Hofstadter is at his abrasive best. The mindless philinistism that dominated until very recently most

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Teachers' Colleges and the National Education Association comes in for a relentless drubbing. Hofstadter shows that the "life-adjusters" who prided themselves on their democratic spirit in fact tended to write off the majority of the nation's children as uneducable. Under their guidance the traditional academic subjects taught in high schools were progressively diluted until in 1941, of the no less than two hundred seventy-four subjects offered, only fifty-nine could be classified as academic at all, and courses on drivers' education, beauty culture, or home and family living tended to crowd out the residual academic subjects. The life-adjusters, Hofstadter shows, even though undoubtedly well-intentioned, even though very far indeed from the reactionary mindlessness of backwoods politicians and fundamentalist preachers, have contributed perhaps as much as the latter to the anti-intellectualism of the American scene. As distinct from political and religious fundamentalism, located as it were on the margin of modern urban America, they have operated in the very center of it. In their effort to adjust young Americans to the life styles of a new age, they have in fact tended to be as opposed to the free play of the mind as have been those who rejected the modern world. And who is to tell who is more dangerous to intellectuals, the enemies from within or the enemies from without?

In a penultimate chapter, Hofstadter analyzes what he considers the anti-intellectual bias of Deweyism in primary and secondary education. He is careful to point out that Dewey himself can hardly be blamed for the excesses of his disciples. It is only when the charisma of the founder of progressive education became routinized that certain anti-intellectual germs, which may already have been planted by Dewey, began to sprout. Yet it remains that Dewey's concept of individual growth "became a hostage in the hands of educational thinkers who were obsessed with the child-centered school. . . . The historical effect of the conception of education as growth was to exalt the child and to dismiss the problem of society, on the ground that the growth of the child stood for health, whereas the traditions of society (including curricular traditions) stood for outworn, excessively authoritative demands." The progressive educators were unable to formulate the criteria by which society, through the teacher, should direct the child's growth. They developed splendid educational means but were confused about the purpose of education and thus ended up with the anarchic idea that what was taught did not matter, be it Latin or homemaking, provided it had "an immediate appeal" for the child and stimulated his growth. Or, as the N.E.A. later put it: "Mathematics and mechanics, art and agriculture, history and homemaking are all peers." This decline

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of a sense of discrimination and of intellectual standards has nourished the rampant anti-intellectualism of our schools and is responsible, at least in part, for much of the hostility to ideas which pervades not only high school but also much of college culture.

Hofstadter's concluding chapter is somewhat surprising. One expects him to assess the future course of those anti-intellectual tendencies which he has so ably traced in the past; instead, the last chapter turns to a consideration of the present-day role of the intellectual in terms of the dialectic play between "alienation and conformity." This is disappointing because, instead of following the tough line of analysis pursued up to this point, Hofstadter engages here in a kind of balancing act which robs the last chapter of some of the sharpness of the rest of the book. He seems suddenly converted to the liblab on-the-one-hand-but-on-the-other-hand school of writing. On the one hand, anti-intellectualism continues to pervade American life—but on the other hand, intellectuals hardly ever had it so good. On the one hand, there is still much in this society that justifies a sense of alienation among intellectuals—but on the other hand, there is so much that's good and healthy in America. On the one hand, intellectuals are recognized and even embraced by the men of power—and this is as novel to them as it is disturbing—but on the other hand, intellectuals are becoming more self-conscious about their estrangement . . .

I fear that much that Hofstadter sees as an acceptance of intellectuals by the men of power is in fact not an acceptance of intellectuals *as* intellectuals but rather as experts. Yet, as he himself has written, there is a considerable difference between these two roles. If intellectuals are indeed, as he has said, men who stress the "critical, creative, and contemplative side of mind," if "the meaning of intellectual life lies not in the possession of truth but in the quest for new uncertainties," if playfulness is one of the major characteristics of intellectual activity, how then can one conclude from the employment and use of many experts and mental technicians that there is a growing acceptance of intellectuals? It is perfectly true that many persons who once laid claim to intellectual distinctions have in recent years joined the Establishment, but have they not in the process lost certain essential characteristics which they exhibited earlier? Neither playfulness nor the quest for new uncertainties seems conspicuously present among the exiles from the Charles who moved to the Potomac.

No doubt Hofstadter is right to point to the eternal tension which has beset the relation between the men of power and the men of intellect: "We are opposed almost by instinct to the divorce of know-

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ledge from power, but we are also opposed to their union." Yet under present conditions one feels that whatever union power and intellect will achieve is likely to be, as Robert Merton observed, nasty, brutish and short. The major locale for critical intelligence will continue to be outside the house of power—while mental technicians and experts will sit within. There is no place for the "antennae of the race" in the Federal Communications Commission.

Lewis Coser

AUDEN'S ESSAYS

THE DYER'S HAND. By W.H. Auden. Random House. $8.50.

In this book Mr. Auden has collected a number of his essays written over the past several years and excluded others, among them some of his best known pieces. It might, therefore, seem that he has made his selection capriciously or with respect to esoteric principles. But the opposite is true, for Auden has not only chosen the essays for this volume with care but has reshaped them, linked them together and emphasized their common themes so that they amount to a kind of literary autobiography. The result is an extraordinary book. Still, it is bound to strike even very sensitive readers and especially those who have known these essays in other contexts as somewhat personal and eccentric.

That it is eccentric there can be no doubt, for the eccentricity of its author—of any genuine author, of any genuine observation, for that matter—is one of the themes to which it continually returns, from the very first sentence: "The interests of a writer and the interests of his readers are never the same, and if on occasion they happen to coincide, this is a lucky accident." The implication, of course, is not that there is no center, simply that none of us occupies it. Thus much of what Auden says in *The Dyer's Hand* falls outside those realms of convenient discourse in which author and reader casually presuppose a ready-made universe in common. The only world which Auden wants to presuppose is that of his own imagination and intelligence, concentrated on his recollections and feelings: a world which can truly be made to exist only insofar as he can find the language to create it and which, in order for it to exist at all, he has to create again and again.

"There are," he says, "four aspects of our present *Weltanschauung*

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which have made an artistic vocation more difficult than it used to be." These are: "The loss of belief in the eternity of the physical universe"; "The loss of belief in the significance and reality of sensory phenomena"; "The loss of belief in a norm of human nature which will always require the same kind of man-fabricated world to be at home in"; and "The disappearance of the Public Realm as the sphere of revelatory personal deeds." Thus there is neither the likelihood of an enduring world to celebrate the poet's work, nor a nature out there to be imitated, nor a poetic tradition to be maintained and enlarged nor public men and events to be praised.

The burden therefore on poets is to make worlds of their own which can be shared, hopefully, by their readers, here and now; which is not at all to say that Auden imagines himself to be addressing a public meeting or even that he is effectively communicating with you and me. "To have a million readers, unaware of each other's existence, to be read with passion and never talked about, is the daydream surely of every author." This is not, however, to advocate solipsism. Rather one must, as a critic, if not necessarily as a poet, spell out the contents of one's dreams so that there will be no mistaking at least the primitive shapes of one's feelings. Thus at an early point in this very carefully arranged book Auden describes his own characteristic Eden. It includes a landscape of "Limestone uplands, like the Pennines, plus a small region of igneous rocks with at least one extinct volcano," but its climate is British and the ethnic origins of its inhabitants are "highly varied, as in the United States, but with a slight Nordic predominance." Its weights and measures are irregular and complicated with no decimal system and its religion is "Roman Catholic in an easy going Mediterranean sort of way. Lots of local saints."

To say that such a country exists only in Auden's mind is hardly to say that it exists nowhere at all. It exists for Auden at his point of departure—or an approximation of it—from which he sets out, as he does in *The Dyer's Hand,* into the open world of reality. These two worlds, the Eden within and the real world outside, are not however in conflict so much as they are the measure of each other's validity in a state of endless mutual appraisal or like a pair of lovers in a process of mutual creation. So *The Dyer's Hand* is, among other things, about the imagination and its limits: in some ways it may be read (though it should not be) as a theory of the imagination and finally it turns out to be something like an assertion that whatever cannot be experienced in art cannot be experienced at all.

The subject of *The Dyer's Hand* is, of course, literature, and

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almost always from the point of view of how it creates the effect of reality: what makes it seem true? In the three long essays on Shakespeare which occupy the center of the book and constitute its heart, we notice that Auden concentrates in each essay on the presence, in the midst of a complex, sensual and changing world, of a changeless element. In the England of *Henry IV* there is Falstaff, whom we can imagine neither younger nor older than himself. For Falstaff the world out there is totally subjective. It exists only according to how he sees it, while for Hal, anticipating kingship, the world is hard and demands accommodation and eventually accommodation demands the expulsion of Falstaff. Similarly in *The Merchant of Venice* there stands in opposition to mercantile Venice, in which no men are brothers, the fairy tale city of Belmont; unambiguous, unproblematical, where there is no contradiction between outward appearance and inner reality. As the worlds of Hal and Falstaff finally exclude each other, so Belmont excludes both Shylock and Antonio, who have lived long enough in Venice to know that "no hatred is entirely without justification, no love totally innocent." This theme recurs, slightly varied, in the third of these essays and the most brilliant of them. In his essay on *Othello* it is Auden's idea that Iago is the sole performer of personal actions—"all the deeds are Iago's"—while the others exhibit only behavior and are victimized by the active element in their midst. Iago is a practical joker on a colossal scale, rigging the universe so that it will cave in on its occupants and so "alienated from nature and society that he has no relation to time and place." Thus Iago represents something like the sinister aspect of the harmless Falstaff. They are both in their different ways citizens of Belmont, as Hal and Shylock and Othello can never be. They are fairy tale characters for whom life is closed jectivists is that Iago plays his game in the open world of reality whereas Falstaff is confined to a world of pure play and is then dismissed when the game turns into real life. The ideal Falstaff, according to Auden, is the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

This preoccupation with timeless principles, with worlds of pure play confronting and combining with the real world of our personal and historical existence, runs throughout *The Dyer's Hand* and is its constant theme, so much so that at times it becomes monotonous and at others frustrating. It turns up again and again, in one context after another, and not only with respect to oneself in relation to the world but with respect to oneself as it relates to the "I" discovering that self. Thus an infinite regress seems to be implied in which an ever receding "I" contemplates an ever more complicated world so that

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the poet finally stands with his back to the void. This is no place to resume the old question of Auden's famous withdrawal from his early commitment to the public world except to note the extent to which he has withdrawn and the way in which, on the evidence of this book, his withdrawal has now become his main preoccupation.

At one point Auden talks about Tolstoi's willingness to persuade himself that utility alone was sufficient to produce art and to allow himself on these grounds to praise works which aesthetically he must have despised. "The notion of *art engagé* and art as propaganda are extensions of this heresy, and when poets fall into it, the cause, I fear, is less their social conscience than their vanity; they are nostalgic for a past when poets had a public status. The opposite heresy is to endow the gratuitous with a magic utility of its own, so that the poet comes to think of himself as a god who creates his subjective universe out of nothing—to him the visible material universe is nothing. Mallarmé who planned to write the sacred book of a new universal religion, and Rilke with his notion of *Gesang ist Dasein,* are heresiarchs of this type. Both were geniuses, but admire them as one may and must, one's final impression of their work is of something false and unreal."

Yet if Auden has to choose between the ethical heresy of Tolstoi and the aesthetic one of Rilke, he will elect the latter, though only as a matter of emphasis, not of exclusion. In the essay on Frost, Auden distinguishes between those poets on the side of Ariel for whom truth is beauty and those who agree with Prospero that "The only end of writing," in Dr. Johnson's words, "is to enable the readers better to enjoy life or better to endure it." Genuine poetry is in tension between the two, seeking answers which shall be valid in circumstances which are necessarily limited in time and place. The achievement of poetry for Auden is to discover in one's experience those sacred objects whose names are proper nouns, elevated from our common experience, and by means of which the poet "praises all he can for being and happening." Alone, Ariel is purely subjective. Like Narcissus, who is more or less the villain of *The Dyer's Hand,* he denies the world out there. He lacks passion, denies evil. (Prospero without Ariel is, of course, worse. He is a bad poet.)

It would be unfortunate to leave the impression that *The Dyer's Hand* in its preoccupation with epistemology is an abstract or didactic book. If anything, the book is a record of Auden's struggle with these tendencies in himself. But it is nevertheless a demanding and painful book in much the way that poems themselves used to be. For it insists, in a voice that cannot possibly be denied, that for as long as we

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are alive, and precisely because we are alive, we have constantly to arbitrate between the demands of the spirit and the conditions of our lives, and one of those conditions is, as Auden reminds us over and over, that because we are neither pure flesh nor pure spirit we are not very good arbitrators either.

This tentative quality in Auden's argument reflects itself in a peculiarly modest, sometimes diffident, and often playful prose which now and then crystallizes into aphorism. Occasionally it gives the impression of its author as a large man who has gone behind a small tree to change his clothes. One never quite gets a full view of him. His playfulness goes deep and at times one is forced to wonder to what extent Auden's concern with the world of pure play may not reveal a regressive temptation which he finds it hard to overcome and which he may not really wish to overcome; that his tentative preference for the aesthetic over the ethical reveals a deeper preference for Belmont over Venice, for the world of childhood over that in which he currently finds himself.

But if this is Auden's weakness, it is offset by a corresponding strength which insists on paying its debts regularly to the practical, demanding and more or less unbearable world which we all share. The virtue of *The Dyer's Hand* is to have rescued those unhappy words *isolation* and *alienation* from self-pity and to have found in them, or in one's attempt to deal with them, positive virtues. Of course, Auden seems to be saying, the world out there doesn't really exist for you and me, but our obligation to each other is to make a world that does exist, for as Nietzsche said in the epigraph to this book, "We have art that we may not perish from the truth."

Jason Epstein

THE AMERICAN SUR-REALITY

THE PAPER ECONOMY. By David T. Bazelon. Random House. $6.95.

In the 1948 campaign, Harry Truman conducted the last political rites of the Great Depression; the Thirties came to an end. The morning after his victory, the promised Fair Deal was not at hand. Instead, the Cold War and Communism were at the center of everything, the labor movement had lost much of its élan, and not a few intellectuals

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decided that they should start living in the American utopia instead of searching for it. Even the remaining radical malcontents were often reduced to talking about simple decencies, like anti-McCarthyism, rather than indicting the society as a whole. The grand theories seemed as nostalgic as a song from the Spanish Civil War.

Somewhere in the last years of the Eisenhower stalemate, the Sixties began. With the exception of the tremendous burst of Negro energy, the event did not take place in public. It was a revival of radical thought. Writers like Galbraith, Swados, and Riesman raised fundamental questions about the allocation of resources, the miseries of the factory, the options of foreign policy. On the New Frontier, the speech-writers participated in this spirit even if the men of power did not. In short, it once more became possible—and even fashionable—to have a large idea.

David Bazelon's *The Paper Economy* is an extremely important moment in the new mood. It is an astute, muck-raking, and angry exposition of some of the more important structual idiocies of American life. It poses big choices.

Since I intend to take respectful issue with one of Bazelon's basic ideas, let me start with a frank statement of how good the book is. The central theme is both simple and devastating: in pragmatic America, outmoded ideas are more real than present things.

Why does the automobile industry sacrifice men to machines in order to be able to make nine million cars, knowing all the while that there is no market for this capacity, and thus consuming workers and production lines for nothing? How did the nation decide to subsidize the urban chaos which is the most successful by-product of the auto industry? And most radically, why isn't that productivity used for some good end? America responds to these practical, common-sense questions with theories about Free Enterprise, private property, stock-holder democracy and the like. These are, of course, utterly irrelevant descriptions of a corporate, monopoly, price-administered and state-subsidized economy. As a result, Bazelon concludes, the decision makers are more concerned "with tending a balance sheet than meeting quotas of production."

Occasionally, a catastrophe intrudes into the idyll and a modicum of sanity becomes imperative. Bazelon cites World War II as a persuasive case in point. After ten years of prostration, the American economy succeeded, in the space of four years, in producing forty-five percent of all the military hardware in the world and raising the standard of living at the same time. However, as soon as the danger passed, the

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theories proved that what had just happened could not have taken place. A mobilization of resources and price fixing were declared in conflict with the laws of paper and the economy went back to a somewhat more sophisticated (by Depression standards) squandering of men and materials.

In less hurried times, America might have absorbed these contradictions at the simple price of human suffering. But, Bazelon argues, in times of technological explosion, colonial revolution and "peaceful competition" with the Soviet mode of production, these absurdities could be historically decisive. I think that Bazelon underestimates the amount of illusion in the Soviet system. For example, the "over-fulfillment" of quotas, so dear to Communist mythology, is actually a way of sabotaging the plan since, in a situation where resources are politically allocated, Plant X's overfulfillment must be Plant Y's underfulfillment, which leads to a marvelous mix-up. Yet the fact remains that Russian totalitarianism is at least concerned with production rather than the manipulation of paper.

Bazelon develops this analysis in a polemical, irreverent, and convincing way which is accessible to the educated laymen if not to the men who run the society. The latter cannot afford to understand their own myths.

It is because *The Paper Economy* is so provocative that I want to quarrel with one of its central theses. The issue is not one of scholastic accuracy but something more basic: where does one locate the source of illusion in the paper economy? Bazelon is devastating in his description of the American sur-reality and then, curiously for a book so suffused with realism, he is over-optimistic on this count.

In analyzing the source of the American illusion, Bazelon leans heavily on the Berle-Means thesis: the American economy has effectively separated ownership and management, property and decision. As a result, ". . . while the intellectuals and other ideologists on all sides were locked in the capitalist-socialist debate, the non-owning and non-theorizing managers were effecting the revolution which created our present system." The institutional form of this change is the corporation; its directors are the managers (or new intellectuals) who rest their position upon education and technical skill rather than property.

In this view, the paper economy is the product of a massive, and unnecessary, cultural lag. The concepts and ideologies of the older system, based on private property, have irrationally survived its transformation. Our problem, then, is not so much reality as it is the way we think about reality.

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Traditional radicalism, particularly in its Marxist form, also theorized about the "paper economy." In this version, economic decisions were made by owners whose concern was with profit rather than production. At best, prosperity was mis-shapen because resources were allocated without real reference to their social usefulness; at worst, this alienated pursuit of money eventually created too much of the wrong thing, or poverty through glut. Historically, the entrepreneur was the first incarnation of the new mechanism. But the very operation of the system concentrated and centralized the economy, and it was even conceivable that the state could become a single stock company.

Obviously Bazelon draws heavily on this tradition, yet his amendment is a major one. If the new class of managers has actually achieved decision-making power, if the owners have been reduced to passive rentiers or chief executives of themselves, why does the old way of thinking and acting persist? Bazelon's answer, it seems to me, must ultimately rest on a theory of mindlessness, intellectual perversity and cultural lag. The Cheshire cat's smile lingers after the cat is gone. And that makes illusion a bit too real.

True enough, very important men in the society often act with a stupidity which shocks the radical theorist. Top executives of General Electric have proclaimed their support of the eighteenth-century thinking of the National Education Program. And, according to Emmet Hughes, a Big Businessman in the Eisenhower cabinet wanted to make a "package deal" with the Chinese Communists—in order to balance the American budget.

But these simple-minded captains of industry are not the real source of power in America, as any Taft or Goldwater delegate to a Republican Convention can attest. Then why do the shrewd intelligences, Wall Street rather than Detroit, continue to sponsor the paper economy? Ultimately, it will take empirical research rather than grand theory to answer the question. In recent years, few sociologists have even bothered with it. C. Wright Mills, who did bother, concluded that at the top levels of power, birth (or property) is much more important than education. I would continue that thought and argue that the corporation, like the Medieval Church, is a meritocracy within well-defined limits. The intelligences in the system must adapt to the irrationality of property. The latter has become quite devious, sometimes appearing as a public Foundation, but it remains central.

Bazelon's thesis, on the other hand, leads to a certain optimism. If the fundamental change has already taken place, if power has shifted from property to education, then the problem is essentially intellectual,

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a matter of overcoming the cultural lag in which the managers needlessly act as if the owners still owned. For me, the issue remains radical: to penetrate the economic heart of darkness where Property still rules.

Alas, these differences with Bazelon are today politically irrelevant, since the question is not one of dismantling the ultimate source of irrational power but persuading the citizenry to a bit of sanity. On the high theoretical plane, Bazelon's study is arguable, but always provocative and valuable. On the level of radical common sense, it is first rate.

With a big book like this, American intellectual life has taken a long stride away from its Fiftyish paranoia about large ideas. Next, the people have to enter the Sixties too.

Michael Harrington

"THE IMAGINATION OF DISASTER"

NICKEL MISERIES. By Ivan Gold. The Viking Press. $3.95.

"Bobbie Bedmer at the age of nineteen during the course of three warm August days and nights lost not her virginity which she had long before misplaced in the back of an automobile but the memory of it, and almost, along with this, the capacity to remember." On the very first page of "A Change of Air," a story written while Ivan Gold was yet an undergraduate, we feel the taut economy of style, the easy precision of thought and feeling, that give this collection so much of its distinction. Style, we are reminded, is not simply an element of form: Gold's unsentimental toughness, his cleanness of detail and avoidance of the merely ornamental make possible an intensity of human concern that in too many young writers is lost in literary bravura.

This concern is evident too in his choice of characters. His people are misfits—near-delinquents, long-suffering whores, Army stumblebums —outcasts on the fringes of an existing order, who yet preserve a certain autonomy of will which makes them something more than mere victims. Their miseries are sometimes small, at other times they culminate in violent destruction—Gold has in full measure what James called "the imagination of disaster" and his narrative skill is nowhere so striking as in moments of catastrophe—yet in each case they call our moral feelings into play in an anxious and original way.

So insistent is Gold's vision of violence and misfortune, so marked

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is his human concern, that he has evoked the suspicion of that fervent believer in the ultimate humaneness of the Organized System, *Time* magazine. The collection, the Luce reviewer finds, is distressingly obsessed with outcasts and minority-groups, and Gold himself, embittered by *ressentiment,* must be a "sensitive outsider ruminating on his own alienation." The writer concludes with a fatherly warning against ideology; he tells Gold that he is "too good a man for the dollar-dreadful trade." We can lay the reviewer's fears to rest. No writer could more positively escape ideology and master it than Gold. Though his material is that of Protest literature, the emotions are altogether new; this is especially evident in his best story, "The Nickel Miseries of George Washington Carver Brown." The Protest Novel, as James Baldwin showed in one of his first essays, involves a subtle collaboration with the myths of the oppressor, that is, with his effort to de-humanize his victim. The political (and literary) mission of the novelist is to create the real human images that escape mythology, and therefore to explore moral complexities that belie a simple Manicheanism. Ideological literature has a point to make, but a point on the same abstract plane as points it opposes; thus the categories of exploitation are inverted but not transcended. The work of de-humanization is carried further. Gold's greatest achievement—the result of his respect for integral human experience, indeed the key to his claim upon us—is his extraordinary grasp of moral complexity.

George Washington Carver Brown is a hapless Negro recruit in an Army camp in Georgia who is persecuted and finally destroyed during basic training. The narrative builds up to a nightmare urgency. An overall moral responsibility is clear, yet Gold pays painstaking respect to the varying degrees of individual complicity with the actual culprit, including the complicity of Brown himself. Beneath his genuine terror, Brown (as we are perhaps too insistently told) takes an obscure pleasure in his treatment, almost courts it. We meet another Negro, the educated Northerner Hines, coping with his shame and humiliation at the public latrine. Gold uses such a scene to evoke the tacit oppressiveness of Army life in its assault on the private self, just as he uses small training details to portray its mindless overt brutality. But here too, as with Brown, we hear a sort of continuous undersong; for Hines, though his shame is understandable, is partly at fault, because he shrinks in every possible way from human contact. Nuance of personal feeling, of course, has a different order of importance from objective and institutional conditions, and Gold rightly refuses to dissolve either the persecution of Brown or the more subtle assault on Hines into

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a problem of individual psychology. Gold's accomplishment is to preserve a counterpoint between objective fact and individual response, between given conditions and private motives, and thus force us to confront questions that lie beyond ideology.

The problem of protest and ideology is demonstrated in another of the story's complex figures, the "liberal" white Southerner, Frazier. Full of the slogans of equality, he is the only person who tries to establish contact with Hines; but as the Negro realizes, he approaches him not as Hines but as "Northern Negro," someone perhaps articulate enough to provide him with a tale of personal humiliation as a feather for his liberal cap. We are not surprised—after Hines refuses to become the cliché he seeks—when we glimpse the latent violence beneath Frazier's good will, nor when he exercises his detached sophistication at the moment of Brown's disaster to see it in comfortably symbolic terms: "'That boy is crucified up there,' Frazier said aloud, 'he is paying for the sins of Charlie Company.' He looked around—was it possible that someone within earshot might be worthy of the conceit? —but no one had heard." This then is the ambiguity of awareness that operates in "The Nickel Misery of George Washington Carver Brown," and, though less fully achieved, it is not absent from the other stories in this collection. "The girl has suffered an ordeal," the doctor proclaims of Bobbie Bedmer, "been without food and raped many times." But we know better. We know that her three-day binge among the werewolves was not a rape but a calculated aggression against her respectability, her emotional stability, and her job in a button factory. Indeed, we say, not the most effective sort of protest, but when she returns two years later, rehabilitated and adjusted by "one hell of a psychiatrist," the loss, we know, is greater than the gain.

Other stories abound in similar, though less spectacular, inversions. At their best, they come out not as a simple ironic reversal but as an openness: our basic attitudes are left hanging, meanings seem to evade our longing for clarity and simplicity, characters are suspended in ambiguous positions, in attitudes charged with meaning rather than explanation—the "Carver Brown" story concludes in a tableau, with each character frozen in a gesture on the fringe of the central action.

Gold's subtlety sometimes leads him into unnecessary obscurity. At these moments his language seems to take flight from normal syntax into a region either of exuberant but misplaced virtuosity or, occasionally, of plain bad prose. Now and then his effort to give detail a physical immediacy leads to affectation. At other times he completely masters an oblique narrative style, and makes good use of momentary

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obscurity, as in "All You Faceless Voyagers," a story that yields itself only on a second reading. Sometimes his eye and ear fail him badly, notably at points in the novella "Taub East." His rabbinical student, Taub, strikes me as a pastiche of false gestures and superficially mannered tones, an interloper from yet-to-be-written story by Philip Roth. The collection as a whole is uneven, but Gold is more impressive in his unevenness than many established writers in their finish and polish. These stories proclaim the presence of a major new talent.

Morris Dickstein

READING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

THE CONSERVATIVE ENEMY. By C. A. R. Crosland. Schocken Books. $4.95.

POWER, POLITICS AND PEOPLE. By C. Wright Mills. Ballantine Books. $1.45.

Crosland and Mills both call themselves socialists, but the resemblance between them almost ends there. Crosland is a former Oxford economist who, as one of the British Labor Party's leading theorists, exemplifies that union of thought and power which Mills so often extolled as a political aim and sought personally to achieve in the last few years of his life in his relations with the Castro regime in Cuba and the European New Left. Anyone who wants a clear idea of what a democratic socialist program might look like in the world of the mixed economy, managerial capitalism, and an upgraded working class, can learn more from Crosland than from almost any other writer on the left. Certainly far more than from Mills, who, even as he described it, could scarcely bring himself to acknowledge that this new world existed, and who preferred his own, often pungent, brand of radical rhetoric to anything so specific or so prosy as a political program.

Crosland is, of course, a "revisionist," and the very specificity of some of his suggestions restricts their relevance to England, a fact his American publishers play down. He leaves himself open to the standard charge of "insularity," which has been growing in England and is a symptom of its decline. Yet he is writing, after all, not as a commentator on the "drift" of world history, but as a potential leading figure in the next Labour government, so the charge is not altogether appropriate except perhaps with reference to the very slight attention he pays to Britain's international position. Anyway, would that we had a comparable

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program of domestic reform worked out for America, instead of having to be content with the slogans of the New Frontier and the timid and limited proposals beyond which even the more liberal Democrats seem incapable of going.

Crosland's program is largely an extension and updating of the one he advanced in his previous book, *The Future of Socialism*. His exposition, however, has improved in the direction of greater crispness, economy and elegance, perhaps because most of the chapters of the present book were written as magazine essays in which he politely but mercilessly deals with his critics on both the right and the left. Crosland wants to increase Britain's lagging rate of economic growth—the lowest in the Western world—by greatly expanded public expenditures. He proposes new redistributive taxes, greater control of commercial advertising, educational reform that would transform (without abolishing) the still undemocratic "public" schools, and urban planning. An analysis of changes in the electorate and the trend of the Labour vote leads him to the conclusion that Labour risks a loss of about two per cent at each successive General Election unless it refurbishes its organization and campaigning methods, identifies itself with new policies, and drops its "sectional one-class image" and the associated dogma of total nationalization of industry.

This realistic, intelligent latter-day Fabianism will hardly satisfy those leftists who continue to proclaim themselves committed to "revolutionary change," "structural transformation," or the "new utopian society." Clearly, Crosland's reforms presuppose acceptance of twentieth-century industrial society, which is neither capitalist nor socialist, though possessing major features of both. Although he praises their cultural criticism, he is devastating in his treatment of the ideologists of the New Left, exposing the bad logic, faulty evidence and economic illiteracy of their effort to apply C. Wright Mills's "power elite" concept to England by uncovering a group of corporate "controllers" and "insiders" alleged to be the hidden rulers of the country. He is scathing on the sacrificial millenarianism of the Labour Left, which would prefer to wait for some catastrophe to bring a militant Labour Party to power rather than compete for office by adapting to the new circumstances of the present.

Crosland overlooks the important case to be made for the view that intellectuals who are justifiably dissatisfied with contemporary society should hold themselves aloof from the existing terms of political competition and concentrate on developing wide-ranging "utopian" visions of alternative possibilities. But it is hard to believe that the New

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Left intellectuals in England and America are truly dedicated to pursuing this demanding and even heroic course. Judging from their readiness to embrace simple agitational causes like unilateral disarmament and to identify with charismatic left-authoritarian regimes like Castro's or Nkrumah's, they are more concerned with nursing their hostility to modern Western society and satisfying their passion for ideological conflict. The New Left tends to be indifferent to economics, the study of which has always inclined socialists towards revisionism. (This was even true of Marx, as George Lichtheim has recently shown.) It also exhibits, as Crosland notes, a contempt for democratic institutions, for which, of course, there is a certain justification where newly independent backward countries are concerned. I find it disturbing, however, that so many apologists for authoritarianism in the underdeveloped world seem to be moved to question the value and relevance of democracy in the West as well. Even Mills, in one of his later essays included in *Power, Politics and People*, wonders whether there might not be new and better ways of achieving social change than through the "historic agencies" of parliaments and parties of the left, although he does not even hint at what he has in mind.

It is necessary to separate Mills's work as a sociologist from his openly political pronouncements, while recognizing that the frequent excellence of the former owes much to a sense of relevance shaped by the traditional political concerns of the left. On the whole, Mills had a salutary influence on American academic sociology, especially as its critic. Thus the re-publication of some of his best short pieces in this large collection of his essays is welcome, particularly his early writings on the sociology of knowledge and on class in America.

But as a political thinker, and more specifically as a socialist theoretician, there is less to Mills than meets the eye, his role as an intellectual mentor of the New Left notwithstanding. In spite of his characteristically American predilection for moralizing about politics and the conduct of the powerful, his politics were animated largely by the memory of Marxism. I do not mean by this merely that there were many residues of Marxist ideas in his thinking, but that what he was perennially seeking was a comprehensive theory of modern society from which definite political conclusions could be drawn. Marxism had provided such a theory in the past, but Mills was too sophisticated to believe that it could provide without extensive revision a political program in the world of the welfare state and the cold war. He wanted to hang on to the theoretical possibilities of Marxism while abandoning much of its substance, but he never found a substitute for what had

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been abandoned and was therefore forced to make do with a few jerry-built, endlessly reiterated, notions like that of the "power elite," and with sweeping, angry judgments that amounted to no more than rhetorical statements of problems rather than suggestions for their political solution.

As a substitute for the classical Marxist perspective of crisis and collapse, Mills postulated the imminence of World War III and nuclear holocaust. Even if we overlook the role of the Soviet Union, it is hard to see how on Mills's own reasoning the growing probability of war follows from the "structural trend" of capitalism. For he attributes to the American power elite a desire for a permanent war economy rather than for war itself, which under nuclear conditions could hardly be conceived of as in the elite's interests however these are defined. Here Mills fell back on pacifist assumptions about armaments and arms races inevitably leading to war, although he stated rather than argued them.

For the cohesive capitalist ruling class of Marxism—"Big Business" or "Wall Street" in its popular American versions—Mills substituted, of course, his concept of the power elite. But he never came to terms with the decline of propertied interests in the old sense as a result of the corporate revolution and, like other rear-guard socialists, was always looking for traditional owning groups standing behind the corporate managers.

Mills was clear-eyed enough to see that the working class could no longer be expected to fulfill its Marxist role as the agency of revolutionary change. He hoped that revolutions in the underdeveloped countries would react back on the West in the context of cold war competition and the rise of new power centers. But for the most part he simply reasserted the will to change as the distinctive mission of Western intellectuals.

Change to what? Mills does not say. Except for a few brief remarks in favor of guild socialism in his first, rarely consulted book, *The New Men of Power*, Mills never tells us even in general terms what a socialist society might look like. He occasionally speaks of the need to judge the present in the light of such "utopian ideas" as "freedom" and "rationality," and he speaks often of re-creating the "classic democracy" of early nineteenth-century America in the larger technological world of the present. Mills frequently contrasts the emptiness and vulgarity of "mass society" with the vigorous and alert "publics" of an earlier age, but one hesitates to attribute Paul Goodman's opinions to him and he never suggests how the "classic" ideals of the Enlightenment might be embodied in institutions today.

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Most frequently, he refers to the uniting of power and intellect as his political goal. The definition of the intellectual as "maker of history" is the remnant of the Marxist heritage to which Mills is most deeply attached. He attacks the view that contemporary history is a tragic process of impersonal drift on the grounds that bureaucratization has so centralized economic, political and military power that a small group of men have become history-makers and should be held accountable for their actions. But instead of rejecting the fact of centralization itself and suggesting how it might be reversed or at least modified, he asks rhetorically: "Is it not thus clear that the scope and the chance for conscious human agency in history-making are just now uniquely available?" He goes on: "And surely here is the paradox of our immediate situation: the facts about the newer means of history-making are a signal that men are not necessarily in the grip of fate, that men *can* now make history. But this fact stands ironically alongside the further fact that just now those ideologies which offer men the hope of making history have declined and are collapsing in the overdeveloped nation of the United States."

Mills sometimes sounds as though what he most wanted was to be President of the United States. Long before he became briefly an apologist for Castro's dictatorship and began to give Khrushchev's Russia the benefit of too many doubts, there was an unpleasant note in his preoccupation with power. In effect, Mills was a pornographer of power: he never tired of blasting the "power elite," but he had a strange mixture of contempt for their intellectual mediocrity with a desire to stand in their shoes, and these feelings seemed to occupy him more than did his vision of a more fraternal, decentralized society. George Orwell's famous judgment of James Burnham applies equally well to C. Wright Mills.

Those of us who knew Mills personally at all are aware that he was an abrasive, domineering personality, though often an attractively expansive and vigorous one. But the point is not essentially personal. For a concentration on power was, of course, central to Marxism and it was this element that bridged the gap between Western European Marxism at the end of the nineteenth century and Leninism. In Mills and in a different way in Burnham, as in many others, obsession with power reappears as a free-floating, personal trait once Marxism as a system of thought has been abandoned. Thus do ideologies perpetuate their defects even when they are no longer popular.

For all the value, therefore, of Mills' occasionally sharp observations of American society and his magnificent effort to instill a sense of the

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movement of history into American sociology, it is disturbing to find him becoming, after his premature death, a political hero for so many of our youthful radicals.

Dennis H. Wrong

A SOVIET "EASTERN"

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH. By Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Dutton; Praeger. $3.95.

There are books about which it seems almost improper and insensitive to speak of artistic merit. This is true above all of the literature of the concentration camp. Now the Soviet Union has made its first sanctioned contribution to this unfortunate genre in a short novel entitled *One Day of Ivan Denisovich*, by Alevander Solzhenitsyn.

Prison literature, if it really be that and not a simulation, falls between two possible poles, and they are represented in Russian literature by Dostoevsky's *Notes from a Dead House* (1862) and Chekhov's *Sakhalin Island* (1894). The former is semi-autobiographical fiction; the latter, conscientious reportage. *One Day* belongs distinctly on the Dostoevsky side, although to refer to Solzhenitsyn as being "like the young Dostoevsky" is not, I think, particularly helpful or meaningful. But it is a book of high literary quality though certainly *not* the "literary masterpiece" which it is called in the introduction to the Praeger translation, and in most of the reviews I have seen, in an offhand manner as though the matter needed no explanation or justification.

The structure of the novel is simple and modest enough—one day (and Solzhenitsyn underlines the fact that this was a "good" day) in the life of a concentration camp inmate named Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. The author is concerned more with episode than with plot as such, and we follow Ivan Denisovich through his whole daily routine in the minutest detail: eating, dressing, working, going to the barrel. All his attention is riveted on such things as his "kasha that is not kasha but passes for kasha" or the best arrangement of the shreds of clothing with which he attempts to fight off the bitter Siberian cold. Ivan Denisovich's thoughts do not go beyond the next step, the problem of how to muddle on somehow. The very absence of dramatic events, the sheer inexorability of it all, convey a horror which is the more dreadful for its slowness and prosaic quality. There is no hope in

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this camp where "no one has yet reached the end of his sentence." Ivan Denisovich is a Bruegel peasant plodding through one of Bosch's infernal landscapes. Solzhenitsyn's medium, however, is not oil but charcoal.

Even the title has an air of anonymity. As in Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilich*, the manner in which the protagonist is referred to by his name and patronymic is the first clue that he is to be at once something less and something more than an individual character. This approach is not Solzhenitsyn's caprice; it merely repeats the reality of the model. Ivan Denisovich is a number—Shch-854. True, he is a number with a dogged determination to live, and ordinarily we should call him courageous . . . except that courage is an anomaly in a play in which all the roles are bit parts. Anyone who manages to survive has this sort of courage. "Now to Moscow. And the first order of business is to survive," thinks Yuri Zhivago, and Ivan Denisovich echoes him when he says, "We'll live through everything, God willing, and it will end." The words are similar, but the contexts are entirely different. Ivan Denisovich can ill afford Zhivago's heroic reserve. "Everything is as it should be on Shukhov—go ahead, pinch his chest, yes, his soul too."

Some readers will be dissatisfied because fiction has come between them and the facts they want to know. They will want a more straightforward, *Sakhalin*-type account. There are, of course, significant lacunae in *One Day*. Many things are placed out of our field of vision. Death, for example, is alluded to rather than directly presented. Solzhenitsyn writes in the style of Hemingway, the one non-Russian whose work exerts an important influence on Soviet writers today. The clipped and dry "Hemingway manner" is, in fact, all but obligatory in contemporary Russian war (and now, we may assume, prison) fiction. This taken into account, Solzhenitsyn's approach of indirect statement may be seen to be quite in keeping with the style and manner he is following, whatever the other contributing factors may be. The threads of cause and effect cannot be too easily separated here, but then the writer, as differentiated from the sociologist, always must be exclusive. Solzhenitsyn's representative character conveys the essence of these camps far more forcefully than statistical data or collected personal accounts can. It is the name Ivan Denisovich that will symbolize this black page in modern Russian history.

Solzhenitsyn's language, which is as important as any character, deserves special mention. It is, like prison language everywhere, a unique linguistic outgrowth and is meant to have a strange effect even on the native reader. Also, Solzhenitsyn's frequent usage of vulgarisms

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or euphemisms for them is something quite bold in Soviet writing which has long been known for its prudery. Every word is used for effect. Even the title shows Solzhenitsyn's characteristic terseness. This is, by the way, spoiled in the English translation of the title (the Russian language can quite easily express "in the life of," had Solzhenitsyn wanted to say that) which sounds like the name of one of those daytime television programs. Both English translations are good enough, and both ought to be much better. Mistakes and omissions are fairly infrequent and minor, and the two versions play to a draw on this account. I favor the Parker version just because it more closely renders the syntax and feel of the original. Thus Parker's translation: "Now for that slice of sausage. Into the mouth. Getting your teeth into it. Your teeth. The meaty taste. And the meaty juice, the real stuff" comes closer to what Solzhenitsyn wrote and how he wrote it than the Hayward-Hingley version, which is rather freely and capriciously reassembled: "And he put the piece of sausage in his mouth and chewed it and chewed it. The taste of that meat, and the juice that came out of it!"

On one other point the translations also diverge widely: Parker translates the four letter words with some (often excessive) restraint, while Hayward and Hingley "have thought it best to ignore the prudish conventions of Soviet publishing and spell out the English equivalents in full." This choice changes the tone of the novel considerably, and I personally wonder if the assumption upon which it was made was justified inasmuch as Solzhenitsyn himself does "spell out" a sufficient number of the words, something to which any reader of the Parker translation will testify. Needless to say, the Hayward-Hingley version has been widely praised for precisely these licenses of style and language.

The great value of *One Day* is, finally, political, but its artistic qualities should not be too lightly dismissed. It is one of the several recent encouraging signs (and the first to be presented to English readers) that contemporary Russian literature is crossing the threshold into mature imaginative achievement.

Andrew Field

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A HISTORY OF MARXISM

MARXISM: AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY. By George Lichtheim. Frederick A. Praeger. $8.50.

This is to my knowledge the most adequate and most lucid presentation of the development of Marxian theory and the Marxian movements from 1848 to the time of the first World War. Concentrating on German and Austrian history, the book succeeds in tracing and analyzing within the framework of a changing society the various Marxist schools—revisionist, orthodox, centrist, etc.—the issues which divided them, and the gradual transformation of the original theory in this process. The chapter on Engels, which shows the beginnings of the codification of critical theory into a universal "system," is the high point of this analysis. The following critical remarks do not minimize the achievement. They refer mainly to the last part of the book, entitled "The Dissolution of the Marxian System," which deals (in fifty pages) with the development from 1918 to 1948, and which does not sustain the level of the preceding discussion.

In the preface to his book, the author states that his study "represents no commitment to anything save the critical method inherent in the exercise of rational thinking" (p. 7). In the Introduction he says that:

> to take a historical view of his [Marx's] work . . . presupposes a vantagepoint made available by developments beyond the stage reflected in the Marxian system—in other words, it assumes that the Marxian categories are no longer quite applicable to current history. (p. 15)

But "the historical view" does not imply any such assumption—and the phrase "in other words" seems to cover up a *non sequitur*. It may well be that the Marxian categories are no longer applicable. This is a perfectly legitimate thesis—but it has to be demonstrated. Lichtheim has not done so, and he could not do so because such a demonstration requires an analysis of advanced industrial society and of the structural changes which the development of this society in coexistence with the communist societies has brought about—an analysis which is outside the scope of his book. Its last part is no substitute for it. Here, Lichtheim gives hardly more than a repetition of familiar clichés and accusations; the presentation of Marx's theory of the state is very inadequate and in itself con-

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tradictory, and the transfiguration of Karl Marx into some kind of John Stuart Mill is almost complete.

The last chapter bears the title "Beyond Marxism," but I could not discover even the outline of such a Beyond, except the statement that the Marxian system has been dissolved, *because* it has not become reality, and is entirely perverted in Soviet society as well as in the other communist states. I have no quarrel with the statement of fact that present-day communism is not the realization, and is perhaps even the perversion, of the Marxian conception, but I do not see any justification for the "because" which makes the statement of fact into a verification of the thesis. It is worthwhile quoting the last sentences of this chapter:

> Marx's critical theory stands and falls with the claim that human action can bring about the end of 'pre-history.' Unless this claim is made good, the socialist revolution cannot be regarded as a radical break with the past. To the pragmatic outlook of the modern labor movement this conclusion may come as no great surprise, but it spells the dissolution of the Marxian system and the end of the eschatological hopes embodied in it. (p. 400)

Accepting the premise that the socialist revolutions which have occurred do not constitute a "radical break with the past" (there might be questions on that at least in the case of China and Cuba), the only conclusion at which a "historical view" could arrive is the all too obvious one that pre-history has not yet come to an end. Why this conclusion spells the dissolution of the Marxian system is not clear—mainly because (as Lichtheim himself has convincingly shown) Marxian thought is not a "system" but a critical theory, and because this theory is not an "eschatological" speculation. Lichtheim here abandons the "historical view" to which he has committed himself. It would have required treating the Marxian categories as what they are: historical categories which try to define tendencies and counter-tendencies within an antagonistic society.

There is another thesis in Lichtheim's book, one that is well argued and demonstrated, with a wealth of material. It stresses, once again, the contrast between the young and the mature Marx; the latter has shelved the radical revolutionary politics of his earlier writings (until about 1850) and adopted "the long view," accepting the growth of democratic institutions and the rising legitimate power of organized labor as the framework of his analysis. According to Lichtheim, this trend culminates in the Inaugural Address of 1864 and finds its codification in Engels' writings. There is no need here to reopen the familiar con-

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troversy between Lenin and Trotsky on the one hand, and Bernstein, Kautsky, *et al.*, on the other. Lichtheim's discussion is by far the most thorough and even the most convincing effort along this line. I only wish to raise the question whether Lichtheim, in arguing his thesis, does not underrate the revolutionary content of the economic analysis in *Capital,* of the *Critique of the Gotha Program* and of the *Civil War in France.*

Herbert Marcuse

THE FORGOTTEN SELF

WILLIAM HAZLITT. By Herschel Baker. Belknap Press, of Harvard University Press. $10.00.

I wish I could say that in this big, handsome, monumental book Hazlitt had at last risen to something like his true stature as one of the great English critics. But the bigness of the book turns out to be an ironic memorial to Hazlitt as a critic; and this final irony is not to be confused with the bemused and rather patronizing irony that Professor Baker so often assumes toward his man. He claims to feel for Hazlitt "affection and respect," but he seems fonder of speaking of him as "a busy hack," and he gives his scholarly respect less to Hazlitt's mind or to his prose than to what is called his "whole immense production," as "almost an index of the period." But he remains unaware of what a presumption it would be really to try to "assess as a whole" the work of a critic who wrote not only on literature, but on politics, painting, theology, Malthusian economics, the theatre, Napoleon, grammar, Parliament, prizefighting, metaphysics and epistemology and ethics, the English press, education, capital punishment, theories of language—to mention only some of Hazlitt's more general concerns, not particular men and events; the list is encyclopedic, and far longer than even this huge book can accommodate except in its index.

Yet the fact that Hazlitt can still arouse an irritated response and never mere indifference suggests why his memory will always be a force in criticism—or why, as his many detractors today would put it, the prospect of his being seriously honored remains a threat to the modern critical tradition. There have always been two main objections made to Hazlitt's reputation as a major critic: one, that he was

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prejudiced, passion-blind, wilfully or whimsically self-indulgent; the other, that he was unlearned, ill-bred and ill-read, even anti-intellectual. The second indictment is usually thought to follow naturally from the first. That is, given a man of passionate temperament with certain deep political or other prejudices, we inevitably get the "impressionist" or "personal" critic in literature and the fierce "Jacobin" partisan on social issues. This is still the image in Mr. Baker's comments—much modified, of course, and toned down into sympathy and admiration for his "tenacious individualism," but still bearing the unmistakable marks of its prototype in the "wild black-bill Hazlitt" manufactured by the Tory *Quarterly* and the young turks of *Blackwood's.*

There is the instance of his alleged "bigotry," which especially exasperates Mr. Baker. In 1816, when Coleridge was about to publish his *Lay Sermon,* Hazlitt "reviewed" the book before it even appeared, for the good reason, he said, that he saw no difference between this author's "published and unpublished compositions," since both were "immaculate conceptions," having nothing to do with any reality beyond Coleridge's own "voluntary self-delusion." Mr. Baker finds only "abuse" in this satire, and for this and other attacks he makes for

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Hazlitt what seems to him the only apology he can. Once again we meet the story of the man who so loved the French Revolution that he became its bigot, resorting to personal venom whenever his ideal was threatened, especially when the challenge came from the poets who in his youth had shared his faith. Hazlitt felt scorn but not disrespect for Coleridge's mind, which even here he can be seen admiring as potentially the greatest of his age. Is there a better way of saying what went wrong with Coleridge—or, for that matter, with all of Idealist philosophy after Kant? No, it is not any blindness in Hazlitt—far from it—that most liberal intellectuals have always found offensive; it is rather his attack on the idea of an abstract purity: his refusal throughout his work to regard ideas, any ideas, whatever their political color, as having their source or end in themselves, as free from personal bias, will and circumstance.

Of course, if Hazlitt's own mind in these attacks really had been filled with the simple liberal ideology that Mr. Baker ascribes to him, there would, finally, be no redemption or significance in his criticism. What an irony it indeed would be if the "main ideas" that inspired this savage Ishmael, this unforgiving scourge, really turned out to be, in Mr. Baker's description, "benevolence," "the sympathetic imagination," "man's essential goodness"! Nothing betrays the Hazlitt legend more than its inconsistency with itself; for we are asked to believe that this man of "personal" consciousness could so blindly defend the humanitarian ideals of the Revolution as to learn nothing all his life from the fact of his own irascible self. No, once again it is the liberal mythology, not Hazlitt's honest individualism, that has turned its eyes from the truth.

One looks in vain through this book for what is perhaps Hazlitt's most original idea in literary criticism: that "poetry is right-royal," that its language "falls in with the language of power"—that poetic imagination is essentially inimical to democracy and democracy to it. All of these ideas have been generally ignored, have been denied the status of ideas, because they point to a truth that liberal and non-liberal alike have preferred not to recognize in Hazlitt: namely, that he, no less than Wordsworth and Coleridge—and far more clearly than they—knew that the Revolution and its vision of man had failed, that the great *"experimentum crucis"* was irrevocably dead. He refused, indeed, to recant to the "murderers" of these hopes as he continued to defend his early ideals, but he had learned that a benign humanism could no longer pretend to define man's nature. And it was, in fact, *this* knowledge that made Hazlitt so irascible—furious at others, especially all

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idealists, for reminding him of this truth, even more furious with himself for having to face it and confess it. Yet far from perverting, his bitterness gave him his intellectual strength, for it forced him to the working-out of what is really his most distinctive idea as a critic: his dialectical sense of the self.

It is this constant theme that still makes Hazlitt freshly readable today, even while his understanding of his theme divides him from us. Like Mr. Baker, we are all prone to overlook in Hazlitt a sense of reality at bottom much like our own, for we never encounter his dialectic in the forms and language now familiar to us. Here, instead, we find an anti-rationalism without method of its own, a psychology without conceptual jargon, historical insight without formulation. But all the empirical waywardness of his "familiar style" proceeds from a consistent critical awareness, for Hazlitt differs from all his contemporaries—or at least from Coleridge—in seeing the human dialectic not as primarily a dynamic of transcendence and intellectual progress, but as the binding force of all individuality. Even when his subject is not himself but, as it actually is most of the time, something general or objective, it nonetheless takes the form of a self: it may be then a national self, or the self of an attitude or a class or a type, or the self ("the soul and body") of a work of art. Whatever he does in criticism thus becomes, sooner or later, a "character." Hence he could publicly damn Wordsworth, for instance, as an insufferable egotist because he knew he was also able to praise that same self, for much the same reasons, as an original and great poet. On the same principle, he just as ruthlessly disparaged as poets his fellow-liberals Byron and Shelley.

Needless to say, this is no longer our sense of either literature or criticism. When we speak of "the self" in literature, we are likely to mean nothing that recalls our individuality; we mean something so inaccessibly deep within or so elusively beyond any man's conscious ego as to be known only through those mysteries of creation that constitute "art" and divide it from our normal lives: "the Unconscious," "tradition," "symbolic form," "culture," "myth"—"etc. etc.," as George Orwell used to say in concluding his lists of modern abstractions. In Orwell, we see the faith that sustained him in his independence: his faith in "the love of truth," in an indestructible "human heart," in a self more important than all its ideas because greater as a "nature" than its conditioning in time. But this awesome reminder of how far we have come, along with all our shrewder knowledge of the sources and resources of literature, would still not explain our neglect or dismissal of Hazlitt's criticism today. He still stands unrivalled as the

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English critic with the best record of judgment; with very few exceptions, his estimates of the writers of the past, and even of his contemporaries—which is saying a lot—are still ours. But the fact that Hazlitt's criticism meets the test of time simply doesn't interest us; and that it doesn't suggests to me the rather terrible irony that for us the word "criticism" has ceased to mean judgment at all. Today we "interpret" a writer, we "place" him in a "tradition," we decide why, or why he isn't, "important for our time"—but all this judiciousness is not really judgment; for it is never a praise that is also willing to damn. We no longer conceive of literature as inviting a judgment on its "values," especially our fashionable values of "irony" and "paradox"; indeed, I suspect that all our celebration of the "autonomy" of the work of art means no more than that, an exemption from criticism in the old sense—from a public estimate of the author's character. And if Hazlitt can still faintly "exasperate" all of us, it is, I believe, because he reminds us that criticism cannot escape the risk of a personal judgment of another's mind in its personality. Hazlitt's voice will always be there telling us that literature, whatever else it is, ends in the act of reading, in a dialogue between a self that has actually written and a self that actually reads; and he reminds us that both these selves have brought themselves to write and read in order to know and judge, not finally "art" or "life" or "the modern self," but themselves. "He is your only good damner," said Keats of Hazlitt, "and if ever I am damned—damn me if I shouldn't like him to damn me."

John Kinnaird

POETRY AND FASHION

SELECTED POEMS. By Denis Devlin. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $3.95.
STAND UP, FRIEND, WITH ME. By Edward Field. Grove Press. $2.50.

By the time of his death in 1958 at the age of fifty-one, Denis Devlin had been Irish Minister to Turkey and Ambassador to Italy. In 1946, he published a volume in this country, *Lough Derg and Other Poems,* that received some critical recognition which was not, however, sustained. This collection, with a preface by Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren, largely repeats the earlier volume with

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the addition of a few later poems. The preface, which is a tribute of friendship, might well be placed beside some of Johnson's briefer *Lives*. It illuminates Devlin's personality with dignity and brevity; it tells us some things about particular poems that we need to know; and it invites strenuous disagreement with several of the judgments it makes about those poems. Devlin is a somewhat curious case. Though he obviously possesses unusual intelligence and gifts for poetry, most of his poems seem to me to go badly wrong. This review will be chiefly concerned with stating a case against the rather large claims made by Mr. Tate and Mr. Warren.

Devlin's poems belong to a period when "difficulty" in modern verse was esteemed as something of a virtue in its own right. As one might expect, these poems are often difficult for their readers beyond any reasonable call to duty. This is especially true of "Lough Derg." "Lough Derg" is probably Devlin's central and most important poem. The editors tell us that it "takes its title from that part of Donegal where annually Irish pilgrims gather to pray." They go on to argue that this poem may deserve to rank with "Sunday Morning," "Gerontion," or Hart Crane's "The Broken Tower." "In all these poems," they say, "the poets are exploring the difficult region where doubt and faith have been conducting an inconclusive dialectic since the middle of the last century." Apart from the fact that this seems to me a misleading description of Crane's last poem, which, despite religious imagery, is concerned with the poet's lost faith in his creative powers, not lost religious faith, the linking of these poems seems to place undue emphasis on subject matter alone. Both "Sunday Morning" and "Gerontion," unlike "Lough Derg," possess a rich and unique verbal music, and their difficulties soon vanish, even for the youngest and most untried reader, in the face of their poetic logic and total intelligibility.

In the following verses from "Lough Derg" the music is flat and intelligibility far from total. The poet is at Lough Derg, presumably on pilgrimage, praying beside Irish peasants whose faith is of a different quality than his own. We are given a look into his thoughts, taut between prayer and scepticism:

> *Where prayer was praise, O Lord! the Temple trumpets*
> *Cascaded down Thy sunny pavilions of air,*
> *The scroll-tongued priests, the galvanic strumpets,*
> *All clash and stridency gloomed upon Thy stair;*
> *The pharisees, the exalted boy their power*
> *Sensually psalmed in Thee, their coming hour!*

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And to the sun, earth turned her flower of sex,
Acanthus in the architects' limpid angles;
Close priests allegorized the Orphic egg's
Brood, and from the Academy, tolerant wranglers
Could hear the contemplatives of the Tragic Choir
Drain off man's sanguine, pastoral death-desire.

It was said stone dreams and animal sleeps and man
Is awake; but sleep with its drama on us bred
Animal articulate, only somnambulist can
Conscience like Cawdor give the blood its head
For the dim moors to reign through druids again.

The main idea seems to be that purity of faith is always adulterated by its priests and its laws. We are given a picture of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the way the Pharisees misunderstood, seeing in the Messiah to come not a Redeemer but a power symbol. Unfortunately, "scroll-tongued" reminds me of butterflies rather than of law-mouthing priests, and the imagery on the whole seems more suited to Nineveh or Babylon than to Jerusalem. The obscurity of the next verse seems unjustified in the face of the comparatively simple statement it is making. We have left the Hebraic for the Greek world with its acanthus-capitalled temples. Here, just as at Lough Derg with its praying pilgrims, faith has various faces. There are the "fundamentalist" Orphic priests who teach the doctrine of the cosmic egg from which Eros and a whole cosmogony emerged. Plato's Academy, after Plato's death, became a center of agnostic criticism; and, of course, there are those whose deepest religious experience is in the catharsis of tragedy and art.

As for the next lines, any explanation that will lay Cawdor has to be from the exegete's brain untimely ripped. But the verse may mean something like this: there are three kinds of earthly existence: inanimate, animal, and human. Man in his complexity incorporates something of all three. In this context the dreaming stone would stand for the primitive, the repressed, the subconscious, towards which there is always a gravitational pull to return. This attraction men feel towards the dark and hidden exists strongly in religious instinct. One remembers here the Druidesque imagery with which Stevens celebrated his ideal worshippers in "Sunday Morning":

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,

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Not as a god, but as a god might be,
Naked among them, like a savage source.

These lines give the measure of how disastrously "Lough Derg" fails to be a poem in any way comparable in quality to "Sunday Morning." They also define positively what Devlin as a Catholic pilgrim is resisting, albeit with little enthusiasm. If we want to give the blood its head, like Stevens's dear lady with her "coffee and oranges in a sunny chair," we have to develop a conscience dark and ruthless as Cawdor's. The trouble is that against the magnificent positiveness of "Sunday Morning," Devlin offers nothing positive at all:

Behind the eyes the winged ascension flags,
For want of spirit by the market blurbed,
And if hands touch, such fraternity sags
Frightened this side the dikes of death disturbed
Like Aran Islands' bibulous, unclean seas:
Pietà: *but the limbs ache; it is not peace.*

The images of "Lough Derg" are not as firmly controlled from a felt centre as they should be, with the result that they seem in frequent danger of coming undone. The fascination of what's difficult has led to the betrayal of simple statement and simple beauty. Compare the indigestible Orphic egg above with the beauty Yeats hatched from a different egg in "Leda and the Swan." Consider the unpleasing sound of "For want of spirit by the market blurbed"; consider the tortuous syntax of, "The pharisees, the exalted boy their power/Sensually psalmed in Thee, their coming hour!"

Poets of Mr. Devlin's literary generation often attempted to vivisect the living word, but, even worse, they often tried to force-feed the occasion with invalid significance. "Encounter" is one of the poorer poems, but it shows clearly how weakening the habit is of *pretending* an emotion or a meaning that isn't there:

"Our saints are poets, Milton and Blake,
Who would rib men with pride against the spite
Of God," the Englishman said, and in the silence
Hatred sparkled along our bones. He said:
"Celt, your saints adorn the poor with roses
And praise God for standing still."

Between the two of us, François from Touraine,
Where women and the wheat ripen and fall due

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Suavely at evening, smiled, teasing the breadcrumbs.
He whispered: "Patience; listen to the world's
Growth, rustling in fire and childlike water!"

And I: "Milton and Marvell, like the toady, Horace,
Praised the men of power for the good
They happened on, with bible and sword; the wretched
Hold out their begging-bowls at the wooden gates,
Too poor to weep, too poor to weep with tears."

In the days when *The Southern Review* and *Scrutiny* were still pioneering, "advanced" literary talk of this sort may have sounded better, but it could hardly have been brilliant even then. On the whole, the Englishman has the best of it. The fifth line of the first verse is wasted, but the last line is a good summary of what Blake himself might have said. The Celtic poet, replying in the third verse, doesn't even have the dignity of a literary position. His remarks on Marvell and Horace are not intelligent, and the last two lines are a pretentious *non sequitur* meant to suggest a spiritual wisdom that hasn't entered the poem. But that Frenchman, who is apparently meant to adjudicate between the two extremes, is, with his insistence on ripening wheat and sex and bread crumbs (the big things against which presumably Blake and Marvell don't count), a *real* bore. Seated near this "encounter," one could only ask the waiter to remove one's glass to a farther table. Then the whole thing fades out in four lines bringing the metropolitan atmosphere of Eliot's earlier poetry to mind:

Boxflower scent. Fumes of burgundy.
Nagging children at the tables
A dream's remove from their father's smoking
Along the boulevard laid with yellow evening.

Devlin quite honestly wanted to write a literary poem in a fashionable mode, but a poem with such an origin is almost bound to be spurious. Although "Encounter" is essentially meaningless, I have treated it at some length because its central uncertainty seems to me reflected in an important poem like "Lough Derg." Those slightly unfocused images and cracking metaphors in the longer poem are rooted in a foundational weakness, a flaw at the very center of things.

Edward Field, sixteen years younger than Mr. Devlin, won the Lamont Poetry Prize in 1962 with *Stand Up, Friend, With Me.* Mr. Field's poetry moves in exactly the opposite direction from Mr. Devlin's.

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There is no question of strained or unfocused imagery here. Imagery is virtually absent from this verse, which is mostly pure statement sweetened with qualified sentimentality. There is no need to force an occasion as in "Encounter" because poetry of this kind seems in its modesty to prefer having no occasion at all. Mr. Field writes verses the way some boys skip rope:

Chopin is such a great composer
I can even write poetry while his music is on the radio
Which is unusual for me.
He makes my fingers nimble like ballerinas on the keys.
He says, Let's go to town slambang on the whole goddam machine.

I love you Chopin in spite of the million fingers
Of little girls with long bobbing curls
Practicing your notes through daylight hours
But mostly three to five after school.

There are two basic insights that Mr. Field makes repeatedly. The first is that one doesn't have to be a hero to possess the tragic vision of life. This is from "Nausea":

It wasn't just the drink but the drink helped:
Suddenly he was aware he had been nauseous all his life
And all the food he hadn't wanted yet had eaten
Brought him now to the point of gagging.

A good puke was what he needed, a month of puking out
A lifetime of indigestibles . . .

Beyond the quotidian misery there is a recurrent perception of sweetness which (thank God!) he usually associates with animals:

I am sure that donkeys know what life should be
But, alas, they do not own their own bodies;
And if they had their own way, I am sure
That they would sit in a field of flowers
Kissing each other, and maybe
They would even invite us to join them.

This pastoral note, especially when it is associated with the New

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York scene, can be outrageously sentimental, but in the qualified manner of *The Saint of Bleecker Street* or *West Side Story*. Here is the first line and the last verse of "Graffiti":

Blessings on all the kids who improve the signs in the subways . . .

A boy and a girl are giggling behind an iron pillar;
And although the train pulls in and takes them on their way
Into a winter that will freeze them forever,
They leave behind a wall scrawled all over with flowers
That shoot great drops of gism through the sky.

This puts me in mind not of Holden Caulfield in an outspoken moment but of Perdita and Florizel choreographed at the modern equivalent of a sheep-shearers' feast by Jerome Robbins. The remark is not meant to be frivolous. I sense a certain perception and substance in Mr. Field's verse, but I find it a little difficult to isolate in his particular style. The late William Carlos Williams is quoted on the dust jacket (inevitably) as saying, ". . . you've got the stuff." Quite possibly: but apart from stating that the "stuff" is often attractive in these verses, I am willing to leave it to the Lamont Poetry Selection Committee to give a more detailed definition of its peculiar quality.

Marius Bewley

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VARIETY

POP GOES THE ARTIST

Ten years ago painting in America was largely dominated by Abstract Expressionism. Today there is a wider range of possibility in both style and subject matter. The older Abstract Expressionists are doing some of their finest work and Rothko has just completed a series of impressive murals for Harvard University. But, in addition, the Hard Edge painters are successfully synthesizing Mondrian and the New York School; a group of painters from Washington, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland among them, have achieved new images by staining their canvases with simple shapes of decorative color; a rising generation of figure painters—Diebenkorn, Golub, and Oliveira—depict the ruined and isolated human beings of a disaffected society. Also the detritus of our culture is being re-assembled with often stunning and mordantly amusing results by the "junk artists." But the trend which has been most widely publicized and discussed during the past year is Pop Art.

Artists who make use of images and articles from popular culture—H. C. Westermann, Edward Kienholz, Marisol, Tinguely—are not necessarily practitioners of Pop Art. Westermann's metaphorical statements about the violent and ambiguous quality of contemporary life, Kienholz's incisively bitter social satire, or Marisol's sophisticated and humorous primitivism, the highly inventive constructions of Jean Tinguely, which have electrified and motorized our esthetic concepts, all differ significantly from Pop art works. It is true that Pop Artists owe a great debt to Rauschenberg, but his Combine Paintings transform ordinary objects by fusing them provocatively with Abstract Expressionism.

The Pop Artists, some of whom came out of the advertising world, some out of the world of painting, stand apart as a group in that they not only take their subject matter from mass-production sources in our culture—magazines, billboards, comic strips, television—but they frequently employ commercial techniques as well: the airbrush, silkscreen reproductions, imitated benday screens. Sometimes, as in pictures by

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Dine and Wesselmann, actual objects are incorporated in the manner of collage. There is no theoretical reason why such popular imagery, or even the use of commercial art processes, should not produce works of real interest and value. After fifty years of abstract art, nobody could propose an academic hierarchy of subject matter; after fifty years of brilliant invention in collage and assemblage, nobody would be justified in suggesting that any technique is taboo. The reason these works leave us thoroughly dissatisfied lies not in their means but in their end: most of them have nothing at all to say. Though they incorporate many forms and techniques of the New York School (there is a particular debt to de Kooning's women) and the Hard Edge painters, these forms have been emptied of their content and nothing has been added except superficial narrative interest. People who ought to know better have compared Pop Art to the work of Chardin, because it depicts actual objects among familiar surroundings: an eighteenth-century still life, a twentieth-century billboard—why not? Leo Steinberg in the Museum of Modern Art's symposium on Pop Art goes so far as to suggest parallels to the realism of Caravaggio and Courbet. But Chardin, Caravaggio and Courbet created worlds of their own in which the reality of the subject was transformed into an esthetic experience. The interpretation or transformation of reality achieved by the Pop Artist, insofar as it exists at all, is limp and unconvincing. It is this want of imagination, this passive acceptance of things as they are that make these pictures so unsatisfactory at second or third look. They are hardly worth the kind of contemplation a real work of art demands. If comparisons are in order, one might more appropriately be made to the sentimental realism of nineteenth-century painters like Meissonier, Decamps, or Rosa Bonheur—all exceedingly popular and high-priced in their day.

When I was a teacher in the 1950's, during and after the McCarthy period, the prevailing attitude among students was one of apathy and dull acceptance. We often wondered what sort of art would later be produced by these young men and women, who preferred saying, "Great, man!" to "Why?" or possibly even, "No!" Now that the generation of the Fifties has come of age, it is not really surprising to see that some of its members have chosen to paint the world just as they are told to see it, on its own terms. Far from protesting the banal and chauvinistic manifestations of our popular culture, the Pop painters positively wallow in them. "Great, man!"

In the symposium on Pop Art at the Museum of Modern Art, Henry Geldzahler, an enthusiastic supporter of the trend, clarified both

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the attitudes of these artists and the reason for their prompt acceptance by the art world when he said, "The American artist has an audience, and there exists a machinery—dealers, critics, museums, collectors—to keep things moving. . . . Yet there persists a nostalgia for the good old days when the artist was alienated, misunderstood, unpatronized."

But I doubt that nostalgia is at issue here. What we have instead is a school of artists who propose to show us just how nice everything is after all. A critical examination of ourselves and the world we inhabit is no longer hip: let us, rather, rejoice in the Great American Dream. The striking abundance of food offered us by this art is suggestive. Pies, ice cream sodas, coke, hamburgers, roast beef, canned soups—often triple life size—would seem to cater to infantile personalities capable only of ingesting, not of digesting nor of interpreting. Moreover, the blatant Americanism of the subject matter—packaged foods, flags, juke boxes, slot machines, Sunday comics, mammiferous nudes—may be seen as a willful regression to parochial sources just when American painting had at last entered the mainstream of world art.

Only in the Pop Artist's choice of subject matter is there an implicit taking of sides. Essentially he plays it cool. He makes no commitments; for a commitment in either love or anger might mean risking something. Aline Saarinen in the April issue of *Vogue* (such magazines are an important part of the machinery that creates art-fashion) aptly says of Warhol: "He seems to love everything and love it equally. . . . I suspect that he feels not love but complacency and that he sees not with pleasure or disgust but with acquiescence."

What is so objectionable about Pop Art is this extraordinary relaxation of effort, which implies further a profound cowardice. It is the limpness and fearfulness of people who cannot come to grips with the times they live in. The Abstract Expressionists dedicated their lives to art and made a point of doing so. And who could have been more committed than Caravaggio, Chardin, and Courbet? But the Pop painters, because of their lack of stance, their lack of involvement, are producing works that strike the uninfatuated viewer as slick, effete, and chic. They share with all academic art—including, by the way, Nazi and Soviet art—the refusal to question their complacent acquiescence to the values of the culture. And most ironic of all is the fact that this art of abject conformity, this extension of Madison Avenue, is presented as *avant garde*.

In his brief introduction to the catalog of the Recent Acquisitions for Brandeis University, Sam Hunter suggests that Pop Art uses many of the compositional devices of the "purer expressions of our times."

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Indeed it does. It uses them in the same manner that a Hollywood movie vulgarized and banalized the teachings of Freud, or, at best, as Truman Capote has popularized and sensationalized Faulkner. It is what Dwight Macdonald calls "Midcult," the exploitation of the discoveries of the *avant garde*. "It is a more dangerous opponent to High Culture than Academicism," he says, "because it incorporates so much of the *avant garde*." This, I believe, exactly describes the relation of Pop Art to the tradition of modern art.

What we are dealing with then is an art that is easy to assimilate —much too easy; that requires neither sensibility nor intellectual effort on the part of either artist or audience; that has no more personal idiom than rock and roll music or the standard mystery story or soap opera. It is as easy to consume as it is to produce and, better yet, is easy to market, because it is loud, it is clean, and you can be fashionable and at the same time know what you're looking at. Eager collectors, shrewd dealers, clever publicists, and jazzy museum curators, fearful of being left with the rear guard, have introduced the great American device of obsolescence into the art world. For one thing, many of these objects simply won't last physically, but—more important—they will soon be old-fashioned because "styling" has been substituted for style, and promotion has taken the place of conviction. Like all synthetic art, when its market collapses it will collapse for good.

For this is not a folk art, grown from below, but *Kitsch,* manufactured from above and given all the publicity Madison Avenue dealers have at their disposal. The creator of such objects is not permitted to mature as an artist, for he has allowed himself to be thrust into a role he previously rejected (though it paid well it was demeaning), i.e., that of the designer of tail fins for General Motors. Allan Kaprow, the author of environments and happenings, prophesies that art dealers may indeed turn into art directors, and he actually looks forward to this development with relish.

It has been suggested of Pop Art that "something good may come of it—just give it time." I am not a prophet, but as an historian I must point out that earlier movements of this century—Cubism, Constructivism, Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism—produced much of their best work at the outset. It is possible that artists of conviction and ability may use some of the imagery of Pop Art in genuine works of art. Some have already done so. But that is a different question.

Peter Selz

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FROM THE ABYSS—
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BY WALTER GORE

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The poet seems to be buffeted and controlled by dark and hostile forces that all at once attack him from within and without. He seems to be oblivious of his own real motives, of what he really wants, of where he really wants to go.—All seems a swirl of endless grey in which the soul must lose her way; and in the midst of this swamp of nothingness the poet at first can find but one point of orientation—himself. But life is intolerable to him as it thus appears; isolated, all alone in a cruelly sardonic universe. Casting about for something to which to relate himself, the poet gradually regenerates himself through his rediscovery of human society and of the objective physical world—he grows into a man of flesh and blood instead of a quavering mere image of a man, as he grows in responsibility toward the flesh and blood world that he has rediscovered.

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. . . I found in your poems many ideas that I have held for a number of years. I assume that you are a young man, because of the temper and attitude that you take in your poems . . . I believe that you have an unusual approach coupled with a unique manner of speaking in your poems that augurs a significant thing . . .
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Emerson R. Marks, Editor of *Criticism,* Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich.

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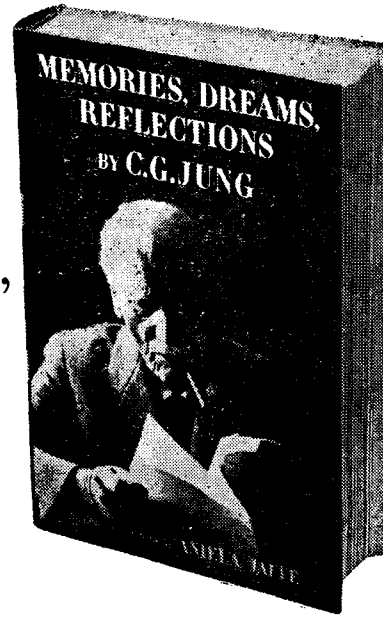

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